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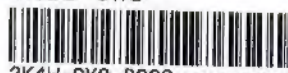
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Volume Two Number Three

June 1986

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TOP SPIN

Who's Who, What's What, and Why

There are few instances in our history where politics as theater have been a letdown. It takes a real spoilsport to say he didn't get his money's worth as far as election entertainment goes.

The mayoral election of Carmel, California—an epic battle fought for dominion over a square mile of God's earth and 5,000 of God's people, waged in the giant fishbowl of the planet's media attention—ended last week with what was by polling time the foregone conclusion. Clint Eastwood emerged victorious from the dust and tumult of the Good Fight, the champion of his people. Poor Charlotte Townsend, the incumbent, never stood a chance. They say, though, that as a consolation prize, she does get to be the answer to a future trivia question, sort of like: "Who was the losing pitcher when Don Sutton pitched his perfect game in the World Series?" Charlotte Townsend's defeat has the misfortune of being imprisoned in immortality as the other end of Eastwood's glory.

The media came, they saw Eastwood conquer, and they left. Generally I would say the best story was missed, which is the one we sought in "Mr. Mayor" (page 57), by Legs McNeil. That Clint ran for mayor was a good news item, but one quickly and easily exhausted and satisfied, and not many people in America went to bed hungry for details. But what was the campaign like—how were those giddy days in Carmel-by-the-Sea? What record would we have for our grandchildren besides the dry facts?

We assigned Legs McNeil to hit the campaign trail. Legs tackled his assignment as fearlessly and in much the same mode as his last major feature for us, "Punk" (January), which was about the hardcore generation and scene. Legs got the story. It's one of the funniest we've ever published, perfectly capturing the delicately hysterical tone of this tiny, ritzy, and dull community, elevated for a brief moment in history to something like a world capital in the throes of childbirth, delivering a new leader.

When I was growing up, my dream was to be a writer. From the moment I knew I wanted to do this, I never changed my mind. Off and on in my 20s I wrote seriously—which is to say as an occupation. The "off" periods were when I worked in the magazine business. But all I wanted to do was write, so I would leave the magazine world and hole myself away in the

unbearable prison that is the writer's selected workplace, and I would attempt to write anything of any validity. I very rarely succeeded.

The oddity of writing, and I presume any art done conscientiously, is the mystery of pain and pleasure. One writer once said that she hated to write but loved having written, which on the surface would appear a pretty neat explanation, except that I think it too simplistic: There is nothing I hate yet somehow love more than writing. When I finish, the pleasure is ephemeral and most of the time just relief anyway, and there is so little satisfaction, because it is invariably overshadowed by dissatisfaction. I cannot really say, "I love having written." I'm glad the experience is over, yet in another sense the work's completion only serves as proof of what I feared: the work's inadequacy.

The only thing that keeps me writing and, as an editor, believing in other people's writing is basic and innocent faith that it is worthwhile. Once one has that in his mind, nothing removes it.

This is why artists are so desperately against censorship—and so extremely sensitive to it that the slightest inhibition of expression assaults them where someone else might not notice or be particularly affected. The artist feels invisible hands strangling him.

Censorship's advocates completely falsify facts while ignoring consistently proven ones. The argument that we should be protected from the alleged evil of erotic magazines and rock records and even rock magazines—SPIN was recently banned by a chain of supermarkets in Los Angeles—fails to mention the price: the proven evil of selecting for people what information they will receive. Any mind that has to be protected isn't much of a mind. This is not an original thought—William Faulkner said that—but at least I wasn't protected from it.

Censorship has plagued intellectual progress since man first left the cave, which he probably did at someone's suggestion and no doubt someone else's vigorous objection. There is probably a relationship between progress and resistance; maybe resistance is the fire that meaningful growth is forged in. There is nothing healthy about censorship, but it is nonetheless a fact of life, not going to go away because I, or you, call it by name. So it's imperative to resist record labeling or magazine delisting or whatever follows next. The people who



Bonnie Graham



Catherine Hogan



Clio Golan

want censorship must, by the nature of that desire, have avaricious or ignorant motives. Too often we laugh at the absurd pomposity of a Jerry Falwell or the intellectual ineptitude of the PMRC. But at the end of the day, it's not funny. Doesn't history teach us anything? We always look back to see how unfunny it was.

In the past, censorship has always been fairly obvious and galvanized any issue. We have actually always become freer because we respected, just in time, what we nearly lost. Now, like the parasite constantly evolving to stay

alive in its host, censorship has perhaps found the perfect chemistry: its own subtlety and society's general indifference. This time, I wonder if we're going to catch it in time.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.

Top: The Pogues, from Ireland. Center, left: our new executive editor, Rudy Langlais, smiling after his vicious corporate takeover. Center, right: Previous executive editor Ed Rasen training for the return bout.

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POINT BLANK

Letters

Edited by Karen Dolan

That's Roth 'n' Roll

Thanks for your excellent interview with David Lee Roth. I am especially pleased that you chose to follow Dave instead of the "new" Van Halen. As for Alex Van Halen's quote that the new Van Halen is a Porsche, well, some people are still interested in class, originality, and talent when it comes to rock 'n' roll, not overrated, expensive cars.

Leslie Ann Cogswell
Alpena, MI

David Lee Roth is quite a character and a great showman, but how can he complain about Sammy and the band bad-mouthing him when he does the same thing in your article? If Dave would listen to Van Halen's new album, he would realize that he was no one-man show. 5150 is Van Halen's best album yet. Dave, you've got a hard act to follow.

Mark Thein
St. Paul, MN

Long Ryders: The Real McCoy?

Bart Bull's review of the Long Ryders *State of Our Union* hit the cow on the head. Having lived a good portion of my life in or at least in the shadows of farm country, and having spent time with folks with names like Bubba, Cecil, and Leroy, people who work the sod and get liquored up on Friday night and repent on Sunday, I too am tired of all the "my poor old Dust Bowl soul" tripe fed to the masses by Sunset Strip and Greenwich Village bohemian/musician types. Every time I hear Lone Justice, the Long Ryders, or the Del Lords twang away about how rough times are up in them Beverly Hills I find myself losing control and screaming "fake, fake, fake," until the silly noise is removed from the record player.

The only rock musician of any current magnitude who catches the essence of the farm situation is—and God forbid I say it in a magazine of this hip-itude—John Cougar Mellencamp; maybe to a lesser degree the Blasters.

So Maria, Sid, Scott, Exene, and the rest of you wouldn't-be farm minstrels, sing about something you know. Sing about art class, sing about bad air, sing about the subway, sing about Mayor Koch, sing about who's got the coolest clothes. But don't sing about the travails of people you probably wouldn't even have over to the loft as dinner guests.

Bret Kofford
Hilton Head Island, SC

I'm genuinely sorry your reviewer didn't like our album, *State of Our Union*, but that's life, and it's also his valid opinion. There were, however, some startling inaccuracies I'd like to set straight.

The Long Ryders are not from Hollywood. Only one member of the band is from California—Atwater, to be precise. The group has nothing to do with the motion picture industry, particularly the recent movies by Spacek, Fields, Lange, et al. I never saw any of those films, because farm life and coal mining are a reality in Kentucky, where I was born and raised, and I've never felt the need for Hollywood to tell me about them.

There's no dry ice in the photo on the front cover. We can't afford it. What you see is dust in the air, which is why we are all squinting. And as for the "simulated sunset," I can truthfully say that it was a real sunset, made by God and not some props department.

Third, I don't read *The Wall Street Journal*. Nor does anyone in the band. So perhaps Bart Bull can tell us what "cause-related marketing" is. My own daily newspaper reports that farms are indeed failing and factories are closing, and yes, we do musically protest such things, attempting to follow in the footsteps of Jim Garland and Harry Simms. The Long Ryders see nothing false about doing so.

Bull writes that the Long Ryders are "nostalgic for a time they never knew, for ditches they've never had to dig, for calluses they wear in their dreams..." My calluses came with my 16th birthday, when I went to work, first in an aluminum factory, then with the old Louisville and Nashville Railroad (now Seacoast Line), shoveling limestone on track curves all day.

The Long Ryders are certainly less "Tinseltown tenderfeet" than the author himself. We are rank-and-file union members and proud to say it. No Long Ryder aspires to the Writer's Guild or to dine with Woody at Elaine's. With a guitarist from Virginia, a bass player from Elkhart, Indiana, and me, born and raised for 20-plus years in the Bluegrass State, I'd say the Long Ryders are about as Hollywood as bourbon whiskey.

Sid Griffin
Long Ryders

Hollywood Highs

Degeneracy is a junkies' paradise. I am so angry at kids who take the easy way out ("To Live and Die in L.A.," April). I grew up outside Belfast, Northern Ireland, and London, and while I'm far from sympathizing with the heroin addicts there, I can understand why a



Kipp Lewis

child growing up in an environment of social and political war escapes through drugs more than I can understand why a child who can't deal with his or her feelings does the same thing. On the whole, American teens aren't politically, socially, or generally aware of the rest of the world. Maybe those Hollywood unfortunates should learn to stop feeling sorry for themselves.

Name withheld
New York, NY

John's Jammies

May I offer a speculation as to some of John Leland's deviant personality traits in response to his blasphemous review of the Butthole Surfers' "Cream Corn" EP (April)?

I may?

Fine, here goes:

Mr. Leland, I would not only wager that you wear pajamas to bed, but you most likely brush your teeth thrice daily as well.

Filth indeed.

Peter Fillion
Portland, ME

"One shot in the morning and I'm good for the whole day": David Lee Roth savors the sweet smell of success.

Gagging Gilliam

What's the world coming to when studio heads like Sidney Sheinberg tell directors how to direct their own films ("Kicking Ass," April)? Apparently Sheinberg thought the American public was incapable of taking *Brazil*'s ending at face value. Whatever happened to artistic license? The ending Sid proposed would've totally destroyed *Brazil*'s message and made the film a farce, not the artistic masterpiece it is. I hope all this controversy will urge everyone to see *Brazil* and give Terry Gilliam the recognition he and his film so richly deserve.

Blythe Esan
Lancaster, NY



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THE POWER OF
MUSIC

FLASH

Edited
by
James
Truman



Shari Lynn Gordon

Surf's Out, Bales In

Bale sightings make for monster "big fish" stories. Listen to the voices of Brevard County, Florida: Richard, an area artist, tells a tale of painting on the beach in January and standing frozen on the shore, knowing that the bale of marijuana he saw would be taken away by currents that were too strong and water that was too cold (he never finished his painting). A local waitress speaks guardedly

about the bale her brother found and sold in Orlando. An elderly couple explains how the bale that washed up into their backyard was reported to the proper authorities.

"It's like an instant lottery when a bale comes in—a natural function of karmic equilibrium," says Mike, a solar power salesman. When he finds his bale, he plans to live in the Everglades, in a trailer with the rabbit hutch

he bought three years ago. Drugs seem to intoxicate just about everyone down here. Like many somnambulant surfer areas along Florida's Atlantic coast, Brevard is caught in an identity crisis: Though a long way from the glitter of Miami and without its cool injections of laundered cash, it can still extend the get-rich-quick promises of a drug economy.

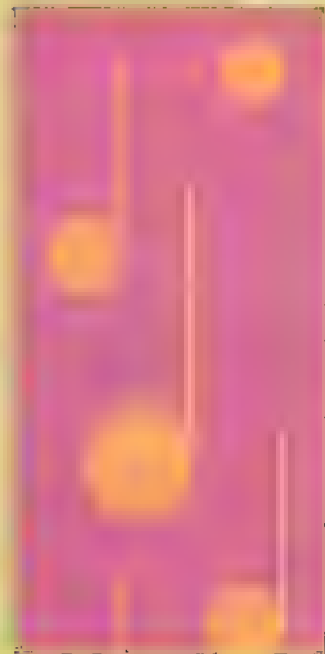
The beach parties begin in earnest on Memorial Day. Chilled beer, vodka-soaked watermelon, bottles of bourbon and tequila, a warm, moonlit night. With luck, the evening's pleasures will turn to profit: a brine-washed bale of marijuana or a plastic-wrapped kilo of cocaine. US Customs is in a quandary: Only one airplane out of every 100, and only six out of every 100 boats, are caught by its drug interdiction program. Many smugglers escape detection altogether; others toss their cargo overboard.

In June, July, and August, the beach can be overrun all night long. Surfers, drifters, and '60s survivors groove with young execs, NASA brats, even insomniac retirees. For these hours at least, Brevard rises from its drowsiness to remind you of its history as home to a spate of fast operators and would-be conquerors—from the astronauts who blasted off from Cape Kennedy to its most famous son, Jim Morrison.

Strength and security are essential to the mission. It's a game of waiting, hanging out, and lying low: Charges against those who get caught range from possession to trafficking. "Over the years some has washed up," admits Captain James McCarthy of the Melbourne Beach Police Department. "Everybody just works together on federal, county, and state levels to find it." And some of them keep it.

—Dicron Gordon Meneshian

A Concise History of Muz-z-z-z-z-z-zak



You hear it in supermarkets; you hear it in elevators; you hear it in factories, hospitals, offices, hotels, waiting rooms, massage parlors. But no one ever said Muzak was supposed to be entertaining. Least of all its manufacturers. "Muzak isn't entertainment, it's a tool," says Rod Baum, director of programming at the Muzak Corporation. Its mission is to stimulate productivity. "Businesses want a controlled environment and we provide it," says Melvin Bernstein, president of the rival General Background Music. "With the radio, if the space shuttle blows up, people stop working." But background music comes disaster free. Eighty million people hear Muzak Corporation music every day in the United States. Millions more are exposed to Muzak in offices and hotel lobbies around the globe. IBM uses it. Muzak enhances productivity at the White House and speeds things along at the Pentagon. It prepared the Apollo 11 crew to take those first historic steps on the moon. Lyndon Johnson even owned a Muzak franchise.

The brand name that became a genre began in 1934 as commercial-free music piped to restaurants through phone lines. Muzak's ideological breakthrough came in World War II, when the company discovered that playing Sousa marches to factory workers upped their efficiency. Nowadays, Muzak and its regional competitors transmit only as subcarriers of commercial FM stations. They use the same frequency, but subscribers need their own receivers, which only the companies can supply. Today's scientifically

honed Muzak uses souped-up Latino percussion and disco to achieve its effect: Its formatted 15-minute "Stimulus Progression" cycles feature five increasingly upbeat songs. The speediest numbers coincide with key slump periods: 10:30 AM and 3:30 PM. Thirty-second between-cycle pauses are also essential to the Muzak ideology. If a client doesn't believe all this works, "we'll go in with clipboards and stopwatches to prove it," says Baum.

The Muzak Corporation produces all its own arrangements. Over 5,000 songs exist in its active computer files; 480 are aired daily, which means that repeats occur, on average, every 11½ days. The daily programming originates in New York, but the music itself is recorded in Argentina, Spain, Canada, the US and — rumor has it — Eastern Europe. In Japan, regular programming is interspersed with not-for-export Japanese Muzak that sounds bland only to Japanese ears.

Using commercial arrangers, freelance musicians, and top recording studios, Muzak makes some concessions to current trends. Funk guitars now cut in certain numbers; clarinets don't. And strings are out these days, replaced by keyboards and synthesizers. Some companies, including General Background Music, have even begun to program original versions of songs, with vocals. The Muzak Corporation, however, is sticking with its sanitized instrumentals. "Our tests show that subscribers don't want vocals," says Baum. When were the last tests done? "Ten or 15 years ago," he adds, somewhat sheepishly.

—Catherine Bush

Yakety Yak

"When I began, I looked like Sir Isaac Newton."

— Cyndi Lauper

"The only reason we wore glasses onstage was because we couldn't stand the sight of the audience."

— John Cale, on the Velvet Underground

"I'll never forget when they first played me their music. I roared with laughter. I couldn't believe how anybody could be so bad."

— Malcolm McLaren, on the New York Dolls

"Our manager ought to be the star, he'd be far better at it than me. We just mope in and people end up thinking I'm the manager."

— Neil Tennant, Pet Shop Boys



Mark Phillips

That's Jonathan Segel (rear left) and that's Dave Lowery (rear right).



"We take way too many hallucinogens, we're totally paranoid, and we believe in giant conspiracies. If we get a flat line, it's caused by the Illuminati," laughs Camper Van Beethoven's guitarist and founder Dave Lowery, nervously. Soundman/driver Mark Phillips illustrates: "We were on a radio show the other night and some Illuminati guy called us up and said we'd be dead if we didn't have '23' on our license plate." On a different radio program, recalls Lowery, another Illuminati person called us up and said, "Somebody in your band's an Illuminatus or you'd all be dead by now."

For further evidence of cosmic paranoia, listen to the group's lysergic new LP, *Camper Van Beethoven II & III*, which Lowery modestly characterizes as "the definitive third-generation psychedelic album." The record's cover looks somewhat like a Hebrew instruction manual. But the music heads straight for the astral void — away from the relatively innocent ska-hardcore-comedy (not to mention Tex-Mex-Sino-Mediterranean) hybrid of their debut LP, *Telephone Free Landslide Victory*.

So welcome back to the acid revival. Pull up a tab and ask a question. Like how did a bunch of young California dudes pick up on all these multinational transmissions? "We never listen to that stuff to copy it," says Lowery. "We just decided to approximate it and approximate it badly. Even if we kind of know what it should sound like, we don't want to copy it. It's kind of a garage-band ethnic format." Any band that covers Pink Floyd, Led Zep, Sonic Youth, and Iron Butterfly in a single set is certainly entitled to its influences in this era of cover-version chic. Thus, by their record collections shall we know CVB.

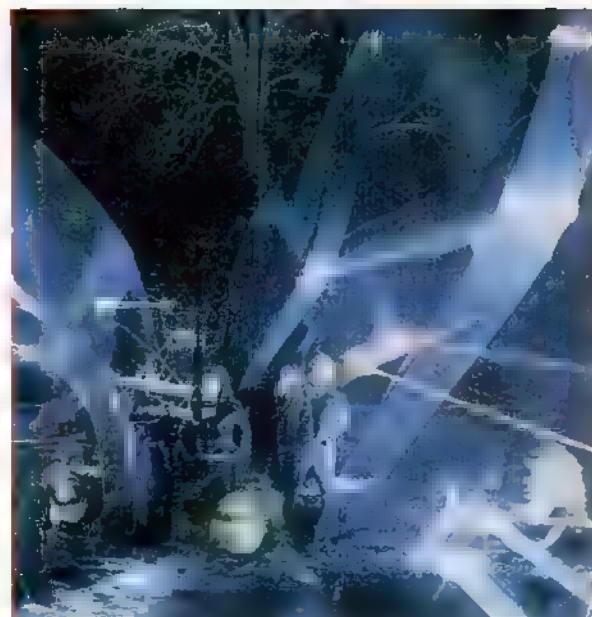
Lowery: "Jonathan Segel likes Love and the Dukes of Stratosphere. I like Country Joe and the Fish a lot, early Captain Beefheart, and early Frank Zappa. I have some Love records, and Pretty Things. The Chocolate Watchband was the best cover band in the world. I'd love to cover the Chocolate Watchband's covers. I like it when things get translated like that, through several people or several cultures. Noise bands have been a big influence on our group too. I really like Einstürzende Neubaten and Sonic Youth. Give us a big enough set and we'll get more and more that way. And I love the Bullhole Surfers, the best American band around right now."

So much for the domestic list. What about imports? "Jonathan likes a lot of Asian music. I like South American music quite a bit, particularly the Brazilian percussion stuff; it's like salsa without the melody instruments. Also Andean music, which is a bastardization of Spanish flamenco guitar. I like Mexican music and surf bands that cover traditional folk songs and fake Arabic music from '40s movies where some stupid American composer tried to write what he thought Arabic music sounded like. I also like a lot of old country and bluegrass."

You can actually hear all of this, and more, on any given Camper Van Beethoven record. Except, of course, for copies the Illuminati have tampered with. Play those backwards and you'll probably hear the Long Ryders.

—Richard Gehr

The State of Flux



Jim Smith

NECROPHILIA

The Michigan Palace in Detroit, where the Stooges played their anarchic last concert, is now a parking lot. Iggy is a PGA golfer and hasn't made an album since 1982. Fred Sonic Smith of the MC5 lives a quiet life in Detroit with wife Patti and their baby.

But the Stooges/MC5 legacy survives intact and fresh in the crunching drug-metal of the Necros. The Necros are a four-piece band from Ann Arbor (and Detroit and Toledo) who, since debuting as the opening act for Stooges guitarist Ron Asheton's New Race in 1980, have borne the Motor City power-sludge heritage like a mark on their foreheads. "It's just the environment," explains singer Barry Henssler, a 22-year-old troll with straggly red hair falling over his shoulders and black denim jeans falling off his ample behind. He's lying on the floor of the band's New York pied-à-terre, the home offices of the publisher of Iggy Pop's autobiography, *I Need More*. "It just happens. You grow up in that environment, and you do the same things and go to the same places. You read *I Need More*. I live in Ann Arbor; I know where all those places are that he's talking about in Ann Arbor. They're all within walking distance of my house."

When they started out, three of the four Necros had little or no hair, and the band played fast and wild enough to make virtually everyone in Detroit hate them. "They thought we were a fucking joke when we came around," says Henssler. Then hardcore blossomed around them, and they became skinhead idols. Their first album, *Conquest for Death*, sounds like a thrash recapitulation of *Fun House*. Now they have really long hair—even by Midwestern standards—and play slow enough to make skinheads hate them. "Did you see the show?" Henssler asked me after a recent New York gig. "And you still want to interview us?" The following afternoon, he crosses the street to avoid a quartet of mohawks on St. Mark's Place. "I avoid punks like the plague," he says. "Cause they hassle me. They just know I'm in the Necros and I'm not a punk, so they hassle us. We get a lot of people yelling 'cut your hair' on tour, or 'play faster.'"

The band's second album is *Tangled Up*. It sounds like the guys look scruffy, overweight, tattooed, and heavily influenced by Aerosmith—a perverse aural snapshot from the depressed vacuum of ambition known as the industrial Midwest. Without any hardcore trappings, the record smacks even more unmistakably of white Detroit. With Ted Nugent making guest appearances on *Miami Vice*, somebody has to carry the torch. The Necros do it like true dum-dum boys.

—John Leland



Danny Sanchez

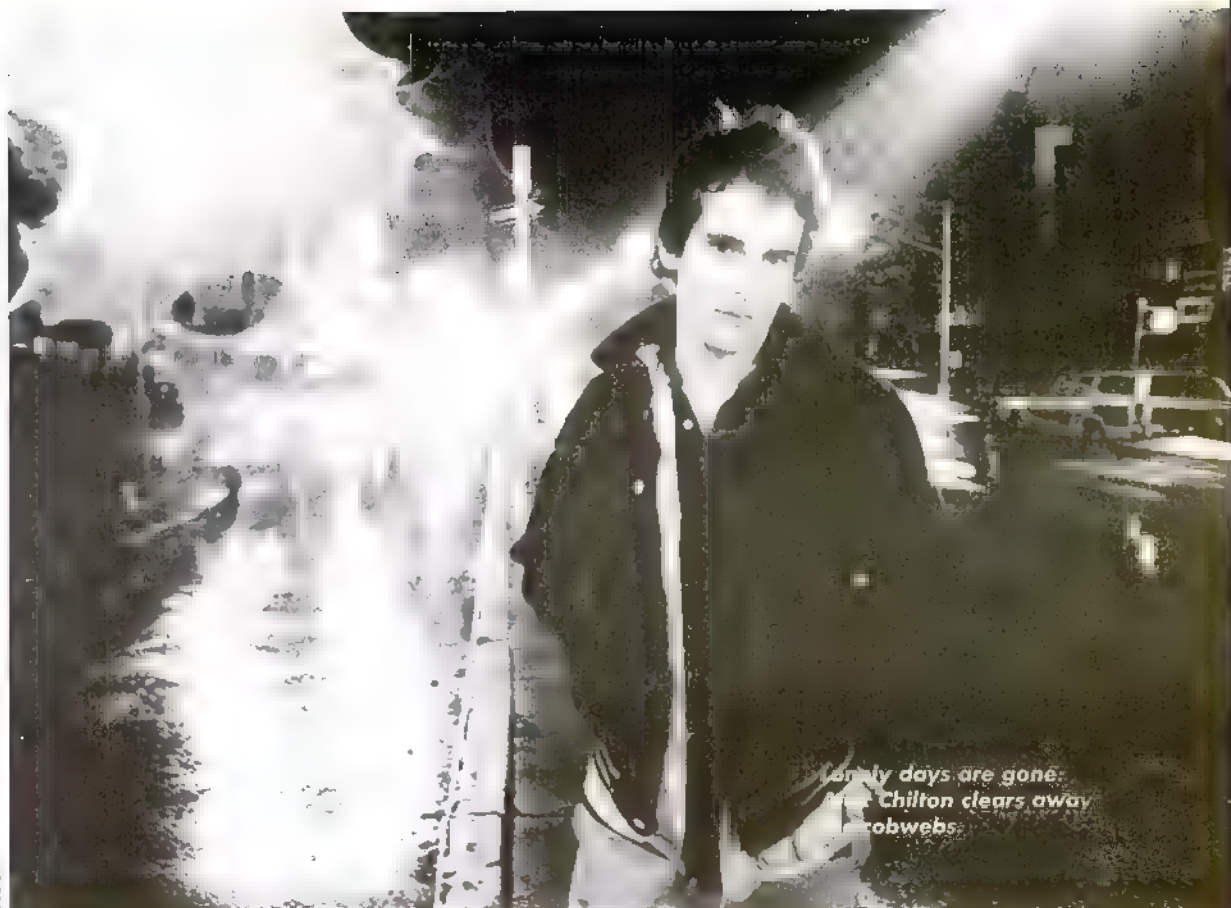
ALEX B. BETTER

Ask any rock critic to name the founders of modern pop. Chances are they'll mention Alex Chilton. Ask such bands as the Cramps, R.E.M., Katrina and the Waves, the Replacements, and the dB's the same question. Expect the same reply. Then ask Alex Chilton about his career. He won't hesitate to tell you.

"It's been like a bad dream I never woke up from," he says. The nightmare began around 1967, when 16-year-old Chilton began charting national hits like "The Letter" and "Soul Deep" with the Box Tops. "The Box Tops were a farce, a deception," he insists. "Like the Monkees, but worse. The people who played on the records were never the same as the people who toured and got their pictures on the album covers. It was a disorienting experience for a teenager. But disorienting in a way that I gravitated toward. I plunged myself into a world that I never extricated myself from."

After the Box Tops disbanded in the early '70s, Chilton formed Big Star with another Memphis native, Chris Bell. With Big Star, Chilton got to play the wide-eyed adolescent he never was, charging his music with the shivery excitement of the early Beatles era. But Chilton and Bell were past the age of innocence, and what they created was something new. Yoking a set of quirky adult sensibilities to melo-

Gods



Lonely days are gone:
Chilton clears away
cobwebs

dies and hooks once intended for 14-year-olds, they transformed a discarded style into a new pop vocabulary.

With Bell's departure (he was later to die in a car crash), Chilton's music got more idiosyncratic, more inspired, and increasingly desperate. Hounded by drink and drug habits, he bottomed out in New York in the late '70s. "My whole life was falling apart at the time," he says, "and that's what the music sounded like." On records like *The Singer Not the Song* the voice that soared and ached in "September Gurls" cackled and gibbered.

Alex escaped south. "I knew if I stayed around the environments I'd been in I wouldn't be strong enough to resist the temptations." Moving to New Orleans, he worked day jobs for the first time in his life. "It was kind of interesting," he recalls, "to get up every morning."

With his world steady, Alex assembled a

new band, started playing dates, and worked out a new recording deal. Released earlier this year, his "Feudalist Tarts" EP contains some of his most engaging music in over a decade, combining the looseness of his late '70s work with the warm R&B of his Box Top days. "We didn't hit everything," he says of the sessions, "but we're in there blowing and trying and that feels good. You want things to sound a little crazy."

With another EP ready for release, and an album set for the summer, Chilton is again filling clubs and attracting new fans. The Bangles cover "September Gurls" on their new LP. And Alex Chilton is still ambivalent about the price he has paid. "I've thought of getting out of the whole thing permanently, but it's a little late, you know? I guess I could go to law school or something. But I don't plan on doing that right away."

—Christopher Hill

"A lot of people think my hair's a hat."

—Patti LaBelle

"And this big rat just happened to scuttle along at the very moment I was telling them I had scabies."

—Rat Scabies

"He still calls me 'young man'."

—Phranc, on her barber

"I don't even know what politics are, to tell you the truth."

—Bob Dylan



Andy Cohen

The Fall, Inc.

Even the most optimistic publicist would be hard pressed to come up with high commercial hopes for the Fall. Corporate cogs grind against the band's independent nature. And though they've maintained a cult following in the States since their first tour here in 1981, the choppy monotony of the music, coupled with their cerebral working-class cut-up-inspired lyrics, has kept the band off MTV, and several degrees short of mass appeal.

But that doesn't seem to discourage

Brix Smith, guitarist and wife of lyricist/singer/bandleader Mark E. Smith. She has clearly set her sights on Hitsville, USA.

"I'm hoping that one of the songs can cross over and we can have a nice Top 40 hit," she says, without a hint of irony. "I think we deserve it. This band has worked hard and deserves more money." The only American in the group—she and Mark met the day after a Fall gig in Chicago—Brix has brought a new accessibility to the group. Her thunderous riffs lean toward mainstream rock'n'roll—most notably on the recent LP *This Nation's Saving Grace*—and she wouldn't look out of place in a Duran Duran video.

Apollitical and upwardly mobile, she's a marketing man's dream date. "I have the American ingenuity," she says. "I think of things much more capitalistically than the rest of the Fall."

With a merchandising plan in the works and their own T-shirt vendor tagging along on the last US tour, the Fall have clearly come a long way since 1977. At that time, they were the confirmed outsiders of British post-punk, pledging a stubborn resistance to the commercialization of their work. For their next LP, Brix explains, they're looking for a deal with a major American record company. In the UK, the band recently switched from Rough Trade to Beggar's Banquet, a move

that had little to do with artistic considerations. "I wanted to be on a label that wasn't particularly sympathetic to our ideals but would bring out the records and do it properly," says Mark. "This is as opposed to a label like Rough Trade pressing 10,000 records and getting back its money, plus a profit, while we starve to death. It was a joke."

Musically, the band has always worked hard to maintain its integrity, enhancing shows by avoiding traditional showmanship. Playing anti-star to the hilt, Mark E. Smith tends to show the audience more of his back than of his face. "It's because I want to concentrate on what I'm doing. I want to get something out of it and not be condescending." Indeed, some of his best writing is done in mid-song, in front of fans who are trying in vain to remember the "lost verse" he's spontaneously creating. "Improvising lyrics alleviates the boredom of performing the same songs night after night," he explains. "I've actually thought up a lot of things on stage that have made it onto albums. That's what's missing nowadays from music, the element of grabbing things out of the air. It's the whole point of rock'n'roll and now it seems to be gone."

In working to capture that spontaneity, the Fall (even at its most AOR) can make music that seems almost naively outdated. Not surprisingly, Mark feels that the band has more in common with literature than it does with rock'n'roll music. "I see it as mental stimulation, sort of like reading a book."

Playing this game, the group has always walked a precarious tightrope. Adding chart-topping aspirations to the act could send it down to earth with a resounding crash. But then, if that happens, resurrecting the mess might turn out to be Mark Smith's best trick yet.

—Michael Kaplan

WORLD BEAT

Gregory Isaacs, reggae's cool ruler, is giving everyone cause for concern. Reasons include another recent drug bust—his 31st by his own count—and a series of desultory shows that have left his fans with a sour taste. In January, Isaacs filled Toronto's RPM club, only to play a disappointing half-hour set. In Montreal, he didn't appear onstage until 2 A.M., and did a similar doze-through. During the Bob Marley celebration at Harlem's Apollo Theater,



Kate Simon

Gregory's voice was so shot the audience walked out in droves. The ripple effect of such behavior is widespread: witness the half-filled house for the prompt and professional Sunsplash show in Montreal, a direct result of people vowing never to go to another reggae event after Isaacs's debacle there. Come on, Gregory! You're not just hurting yourself anymore... Saddest news out of Jamaica lately is that Junior Byles, of "Fade Away" fame, has himself faded into a Kingston prison, checking himself in as the only way to get a square meal a day and a roof over his head... Strangest news is that Danny Sims, who recently sued Tuff Gong and Rita Marley for several million dollars in back royalties, is now running the company. We hope this new reunion will bring about the release of some of the rare Bob Marley tracks in the Tuff Gong vaults... Glen Adams, original key-

boardist with the Upsetters, and the Wailers back in the Lee Perry days, has returned to the studio with none other than bassist Family Man Barrett. The project is called *Upsetting the Wailers* and should be out by summer... Peter Tosh's long-delayed LP *No Nuclear War* should also be out soon... The Abyssinians, who composed the reggae hymn "Satta Masa Gana," are about to embark on a rare tour, although without original member Linford Manning. He has moved into a gospel career... Jimmy Cliff's new movie *Club Paradise*, in which he costars with Peter O'Toole and Robin Williams, is now set for summer release. The soundtrack includes several Caribbean classics, including *Well Pleased and Satisfied's* wonderful oldie "Sweetie Come From America."

—Roger Steffens

There was never a question that art is more about brand names than about art. Or that rock stars are the ultimate modern brand names.

Yes, they can. At Art Aid, a pro-Africa charity auction held at New York's Hard Rock Cafe, work by well-established names like Andy Warhol, Edward Ruscha, Peter Max, and Keith Haring went relatively cheaply, compared to art by rock stars with no auction record.

For example, a recent charcoal drawing by Bob Dylan went for \$4,200—twice its estimated value—while bidding on a painting of



Dylan, by noted illustrator Greg Hildebrandt, stalled at \$5,000. Also, a Ron Wood woodcut of Chuck Berry fetched \$1,500, while a Joni Mitchell painting, which appeared on the cover of her 1982 album *Wild Things Run Fast*, brought \$3,700. What raised the highbrows' eyebrows the highest, however, was the \$5,000 sale of Gregory Heisler's photograph of Mick Jagger and Tina Turner, taken backstage at Live Aid.

Meanwhile, the real darling of the show was "Eris at 3" (pictured above), an oil on wood by Howard Roster, who did the last Talking Heads album cover. It was a steal at \$700.

—Art Column

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KARL LORIMAR
THE MUSIC VIDEO



SHARKEY'S DAY

Even in 1979, at the peak of his success with the Undertones, few people would have predicted a long-term career for Feargal Sharkey. The Undertones' sweetly naive, beautifully made teen-pop, though perfect for its time, militated against either the band or its audience growing up. With his winsome smile and gangly looks, the lead singer appeared incapable of ever growing up.

Seven years later, the grown-up Sharkey fixes you with a stare across a record company boardroom table and dryly recites the week's figures. It's an impressive account. "At this time I've got two Top 10 singles in Australia, and a Top 5 album," he explains. "I've got three singles in the Top 30 in Switzerland this week. So far, worldwide, I've sold about three million singles and one and a half million albums."

With ■ forthcoming US tour in support of the album (*Feargal Sharkey*) and the single ("A Good Heart"), he confidently expects to add to the numbers. He would also prefer that you believe he hasn't changed. "It was just that I didn't have a clue what I was doing back then, and now I do," he says. "At the beginning it was just a laugh, something to do on weekends. Becoming moderately successful with the Undertones and traveling the world suddenly made me realize that there was all this other stuff in life. I suppose it made me more ambitious."

In the spring of 1983, discouraged by their declining popularity, the Undertones broke up. Sharkey's response was to restructure—leaving his Northern Ireland hometown and moving to London, where he enrolled in film school. "I wanted to learn firsthand about the business of making music, about producing, engineering, and video direction. Until I'd done all that stuff I didn't think it was worth even considering making an album."

So he made a series of singles. The first, a duet with Yazoo's Vince Clarke entitled "Never Never," was ■ major hit; the second, "Listen to Your Father," recorded with Madness, was a minor hit; the third, "Loving You," written with the Human League's Jo Callis, was a major flop. But, by the time of its release in the spring of 1985, Sharkey had begun work on his first solo album with Eurythmics' Dave Stewart, whom he'd met in an elevator seven years earlier. "We both had the same commitment to excellence, to finding great songs," says Sharkey. "Whether they were our own or other people's didn't matter."

Feargal Sharkey features a few great songs, though none of them were composed by Sharkey and Stewart: The three stand-out tracks were written by Chrissie Hynde, Bobby Womack, and Maria McKee of Lone Justice. The record also features the kind of over-arranged electro-Muzak that has dogged recent Eurythmics recordings. Here, it frequently buries Sharkey's most distinctive attribute—his miraculous, shimmering tenor voice.

Suggest that he sold himself short to try and get a hit, and he'll offer what sounds like a well-rehearsed riposte. "Musicians aren't that clever. I'm not that clever. I wish I could make records for a particular audience, but I can't, so I just make them for myself, and hope that each is better than the one before. Anyway, I don't want to be as good as anybody else, I want to be better. I have no interest in being second-best."

—James Truman

INXS,

ONX-penses

Hey, I can be bought. You suffer through nine and a half straight weeks of rain, sleet, clouds that follow you around, the cancellation of *Rockford Files* reruns, and you'll be looking to sign on the dotted line when the devil comes knocking. In my case it was Atlantic Records. The conversation went like this:

"Hey Legs, you want to do INXS?"

"Fuck you, I hate rock 'n' roll, leave me alone."

"The record company wants to send you somewhere to see them."

"INXS—isn't that the Australian rock combo that mixes the best of techno-pop with the dinosaur sound of the '70s, Zeppelin, Genesis, and Yes, in an absurd Dallesque funfest and chops off the smooth edges with a kick-ass backbeat?" It was. I flew to Seattle.

I really wanted to like INXS's new album *Listen Like Thieves*, as I gorged myself on room service they were paying for, swam in the hotel swimming pool they were paying to heat, and tried to lure their fans to my room to discuss their opinions on why they thought INXS was the *thinking* 16-year-old girl's version of Wham!, but every time I put on the tape I got bored. I didn't start to feel guilty until I actually met them. Gosh, they were such nice guys, it was going to be a real heartbreaker to return home and trash the fuck out of them.

In the meantime, I kept pursuing their fans. We're talking girls, real teenage girls here, not those ancient mini-skirted women in their 20s trying to recapture their misspent youth by donning Girl Scout blouses or Cub Scout uniforms or Catholic school uniforms, then snorting up a half a gram of coke and hanging out at nightclubs pretending to be innocent. None of those charlatans, but real red-blooded nymphs with long skinny legs and chests that had budded into their prime two weeks beforehand. And they were everywhere: waiting in hotel lobbies, looking like novice whores, screaming outside the tour bus when it pulled up for the sound check, in the restaurants during dinner. Everywhere except my room.

But Hutch (Michael Hutchins, lead vocalist), the Penguin (Kirk Pengilly, guitar, sax, and vocals), the Farris brothers (Tim, John, and Andy), Jenny the New Zealand chanteuse who added background vocals and tambourine for the tour, and Gary (Barris, the bass guitarist), all of them, my new best friends in the whole wide world, were totally unaffected by the pandemonium that surrounded them. There were none of the split-beaver jokes or graphically detailed threesome stories floating around the dressing rooms like on every other rock tour I've been on. These guys actually like their audiences. That in itself was a weird slant to a business full of snot-nosed jerk-offs trying to relive their adolescence by taking it out on some over-anxious girl waiting to experience the big O with a real sex symbol.

But even though they were nice guys who respected their fans and didn't take the joke too seriously, their record still sucked. But what did I know? It was still zooming up the charts. It was just going to make writing about them that much harder.

Then I saw them in concert. Not exactly the Who, but it was a lot more exciting than the stuff on vinyl. At first I was tapping my foot and nodding my head

as the 94—count them, 94—rows of screaming girls wailed on every word out of Hutch's mouth. From the second tier, Michael Hutchins does in fact resemble Jim Morrison, as most critics have pointed out. Same matted hair and sandpapered cheekbones, but that's where the similarities ended. Hutchins is more at ease, looking like he's just where he wants to be. Morrison always looked like he was about to take a leak on the fans in the front row. The foot tapping went to a little bit of hip shaking as Kirk Pengilly exchanged his guitar for a saxophone and wailed away with one of those moody riffs that brings tears to the girls' eyes. By the time they were playing their hit song, "Listen Like Thieves," I was pushed up against some cute thing's buttocks, bouncing along with the crowd. And it didn't stop there. At the final encore, on the last night of the tour, I was onstage with a tambourine, forgetting the beat as my eyes were riveted on the nubile teenage sluts in the front row scribbling their phone numbers on their underwear before tossing them onstage.

God, did these guys know how to schmooze the press. After all these years, I finally knew what it felt like to be a member of the Monkees. Thanks Hutch, Jenny, the Penguin, Gary Gary, you Farris brothers (hey, tell the moody one in the white turtleneck to cheer up) for making one of my lifelong fantasies come true, but I only have one complaint: I never got laid. So like the next time you're around, give me a ring and we'll have lunch—at your place, wherever that might be.

P.S. Put out a live album.

—Legs McNeil

Lead singer Hutch (below) shows feeble-minded rock critic how it's done.

Flintstones Trivia Contest Winners

(from December issue)

Grand Prize Winner:

Stuart Nulman
Montreal, Que.

Runners-up:

Michael Ackerman
New York, NY

James Booth
Scarborough, Ont.

Mark Chutnow
New Haven, CT

L. Dalton
New Haven, CT

Brian Desantis
Demarest, NJ

Paul Howard
Ozark, MS

Alan Light
New Haven, CT

Frank Luby
Chicago, IL

Mitchel McKee
Manchester, TN

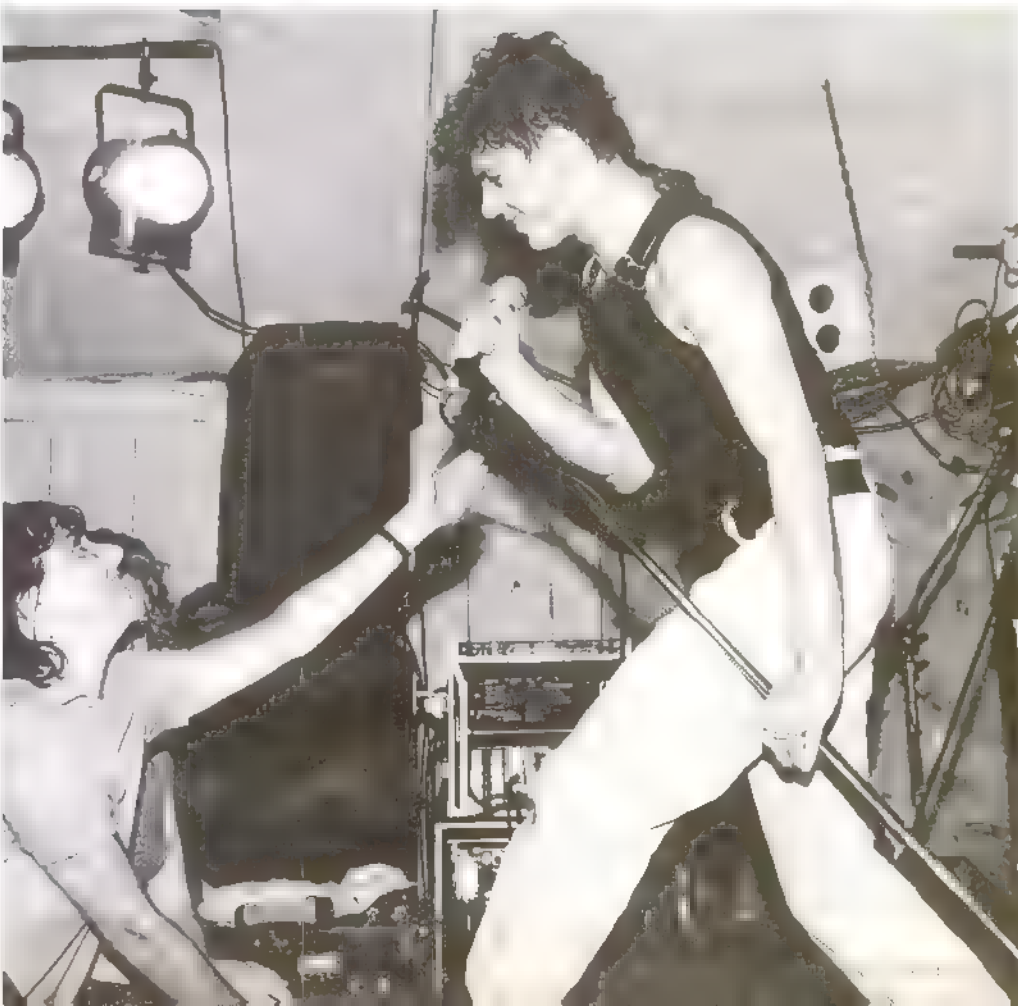
Chris Overland
Minneapolis, MN

Thomas R. Reich
St. Cloud, MN

Daniel Schmitt
New Haven, CT

Ted Stamas
Philadelphia, PA

Jill Zimba
Dearborn Heights, MI



wrong haircut, right car

When Ben Vaughn formed the Ben Vaughn Combo in 1983, ■ wanted life to be like *A Hard Day's Night*. After last year's video for "My First Band," performed atop Ben's '69 Rambler, he felt his dreams come true. Fans began ■ stop him on street corners. Unfortunately, the street corners were ■ in his hometown of Camden, New Jersey.

In another attempt to get themselves in the public eye, the band took to playing on street corners. "We were actually on a corner one evening, playing 'Louie Louie,'" recalls accordionist Gus Cordovox. "We came to the 'We gotta go' part and the cops came up and said, 'You gotta go!'"

"That was rock 'n' roll," says drummer Lonesome Bob. Bassist Aldo Jones and guitarist Ben Vaughn nod ■ agreement, ■ silly combination of respect and ridicule on their faces. The Ben Vaughn Combo know what real rock 'n' roll is about. Last January they beat the Del Fuegos in a snowball fight.

After three years of playing protopunk to the beat of the '69 Rambler hubcap on Lonesome Bob's drum kit, the Ben Vaughn Combo have ■ album out on England's Making Waves label. *The Many Moods of Ben Vaughn* extols the glories of garage music, extending the genre with country, surf, and cryptobilly influences. If Hank Williams joined Paul Revere and the Raiders, you'd probably wind up with the Ben Vaughn Combo.

The many moods are, for the most part, funny. Humble singer-songwriter that he is, Vaughn is prompted to write songs about things that happen to the band. Like the time they all dyed their hair blonde for ■ day to perform at a beach party where everyone wore Hawaiian shirts; hence the surfy bar-mitzvah pop instrumental "Hawaiian Shirts." The accordion Berry-go-round of "Wrong Haircut," about a loser in a nightclub, was inspired by the band's first Danceteria gig. The album's first track, "M-M-Motor Vehicle," also belongs to this legacy. It has personal significance for Vaughn. It's about ■ '69

Rambler.

Vaughn can ■ serious, but he can also be seriously funny. After the listener hears about a couple who jumped off a cliff in "Lover's Leap," the singer guffaws: " 'Cause after the couple jumped off the cliff/One thing you didn't see/Some other guy's girl turned to him and said/How come you never do that for me?"

As the band's founder and songwriter, Ben makes no bones

about this being his operation. He talks about "his" band as he expounds on the \$40 video of "My First Band." "That's my driveway and my car we're standing on. It's my carpet sweeper, my sticks, and my expanding file. The video really stands out like a sore thumb, I think, and in a good way. That's kinda how we are—semi-enlightened idiots."

—Michelle Krell



Left to right: Lonesome Bob, Ben Vaughn, Aldo Jones

Rock Luv

rock is KING

and KING

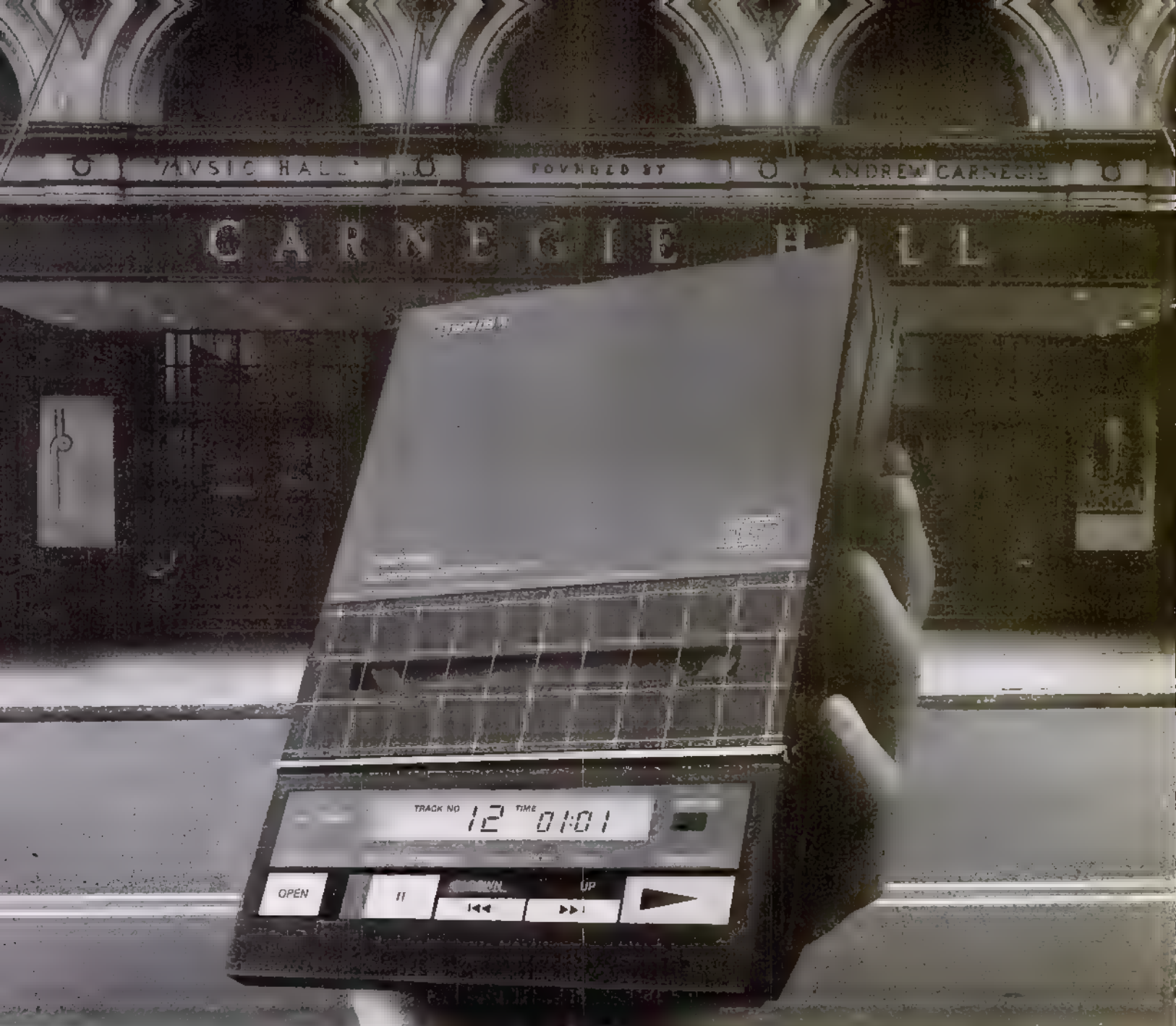
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FLASHES

Life stopped (briefly) when **Donny Osmond**, on the comeback trail as a hard rocker, **denounced** the **PMRC** on national television. "I don't want my album coming out with a G rating," Donny later confessed. "Nobody would **buy it**."

Sonic Youth is proposing to record a full-length **cover version** of the Beatles' **White Album**. We'll repeat that. **Album White** Beatles' the of **version cover** length-full ■ record to proposing ■ **Youth Sonic**.

Christian rock now outsells **jazz** and **classical** music combined, a survey reveals. While heavy metal continues to outsell all three, **conspiracy theorists** note that Led Zep's "Stairway to Heaven" gets ■ **lot more** radio airplay than AC/DC's "Highway to Hell."

On the Record, the TV show in which critics Robert Christgau and Steve Pond get to play the **Siskel & Ebert** of rock music, is now set for ■ fall debut. But will anyone be **clever enough** to understand what they're talking about? "I'm going to do my best not to go more than a foot over the viewers' heads," promises **Dean Christgau**.

How bad can one family be? The Stallones pulled off a virtual **clean sweep** in this year's Golden Raspberry Awards, winning worst director, actor, and writer (for Sly), worst supporting actress and worst new star (for Brigitte Nielsen), and worst song (for Frank). **Rambo** also won **worst picture**.

How **bad** can one family be? Tyka Nelson, the sister of the **Prince**, is about to record her first record. Meanwhile, **Paula Ciccone** recently made her singing debut in New York. She sang the country tune "Mississippi Heart" in what was believed to be a pair of her famous sister's **black stockings**.

New blood needed in the **titling** department: Emilio Estevez's next film, which he is writing, directing, and also **starring** in, is called **Wisdom**; Debbie Harry's new film is titled **Forever Lulu**.

Following the recent closure of Ma Maison, ■ restaurant **so hot** it had an unlisted phone number, Los Angeles now boasts Helena's, ■ nightclub so cool that no one knows **where it is**. (Address in next month's issue. **Maybe**.)

Hungry for **Bruce news**? Dismayed by the lack of new **Boss product**? L.A.'s Bruceline (213 205-7980) offers round-the-clock news, views, and demented ravings from fellow Brucefans. Call 213 205-7985 to deposit your **own thoughts** on the man in the 501s.

Jim Jarmusch's **Down by Law**, starring John Lurie and Tom Waits, will be the **film sensation** of the year. Look for an August opening. Meanwhile, Waits opens in Chicago on June 22 with **Frank's Wild Years**, the musical play he co-wrote, scored, and will star in. The **soundtrack** album is due in October.

Flash in the Penn: SPIN launches its Sean Penn Photo Contest. The **best photo** taken of Sean "The Beast" Penn between May 1 and December 31, 1986, will win \$100 worth of photo equipment (especially useful should anything get destroyed **in pursuit of prize-winning picture**). Black and white or color. Capture Sean laughing! Smiling! Scowling! Sleeping! Standing up! With or without Madonna! Winning photograph will be published at the beginning of next year. Note: family and friends of Mr. & Mrs. Penn are **not eligible**.

Madonna and Charles Manson: The Connection Exposed

Manson's initials are C.M.
Madonna's initials are M.C.

Both are famed recording artists.

Manson is in prison and movies have been made about him.

Madonna was in a movie in which she barely escaped going to prison.

Both are heavily into symbolism.

Madonna wears crucifixes in her ears.

Manson wears a swastika on his forehead.

Madonna slays people.
Manson has killed many people.

Both are big fans of Sonic Youth.

Madonna has a squeaky voice.
Manson had a girlfriend named Squeaky.

Both are short.

Manson has a beard on his face.

Madonna has beards under her arms.

Manson killed an actress.
Madonna thinks she's an actress.

Manson lived in a commune near L.A.

Madonna lives near L.A. and commutes everywhere.

Manson once led a bizarre cult.
In her first movie, Madonna was enslaved to a bizarre cult.

Manson likes guns.
Madonna likes nuns.

Madonna adds color to her hair.

Manson's hair ■ losing color.

Madonna has a song called "Crazy for You" and another called "Angel."

Manson is crazy and thought he was Christ.

—Sheilah Mitchell





"Light my Lucky."

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Material chronology: 1980-1981

Funny How Love Is

Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers was like some love affairs: passion, pain, and then a bad breakup. A reissue of their first few albums brings back memories of a band that could have been the biggest of the '70s if it had only survived Jonathan.

Article by Scott Cohen

We don't want some girl to fool around with / We don't want some girl to ball / We're the Modern Lovers from Boston, Massachusetts / And we came here tonight to say / We only want a girl we care about / Or we want nothing at all . . ."—Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers, 1973

Jonathan Richman is the Mr. Rogers of Rock, the Grandma Moses of Pop Music, the Walt Whitman of Wimp, a wholesome Lou Reed, and a hopeless romantic. His band, the Modern Lovers, were legends before anyone had heard of them. They could have been the biggest band of the '70s. They were probably the first art band, preceding the Talking Heads by a number of years. They were a new-wave band long before punk was a musical term. While everyone else back then was going to extremes to be outrageous, the Modern Lovers bent over backwards to be normal. While everybody else was into glitter, makeup, and platform shoes, the Modern Lovers wore T-shirts, so you could see from their arms the kind of work they did; short hair, so you could see their faces; and sneakers (they were just as tall as they appeared). When everyone else was smashed on coke and Quaaludes, the Modern Lovers were singing songs like "I'm Straight."

They were the only ones at their concerts not stoned. And when everyone was into the modern world, the Modern Lovers were praising old world virtues and values.

Despite, or perhaps because of, their eccentricities, the Modern Lovers became the darlings of rock critics and trendsetters. Record companies begged to sign them.

Perhaps they were too virtuous, too straight, too old world, or too modern, but when opportunity came knocking at their door, they tried to sneak out the back. They did everything they could not to succeed, and finally, as if to guarantee failure, they did the only thing left—they broke up.

There are three people on the other lines at the bank and on Jonathan's there's eleven, but that's fine, 'cause Jonathan's in heaven. He's got a crush on the new teller.

Jonathan's in touch with the modern world. Jonathan's in love with rock 'n' roll, Massachusetts when it's late at night,

and the neon when it's cold outside. He's in love with Route 128 by the power lines. He loves to drive to the Stop 'N' Shop late at night with his AM radio on.

Jonathan, Jonathan, when you walk into the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston, where do you go first?

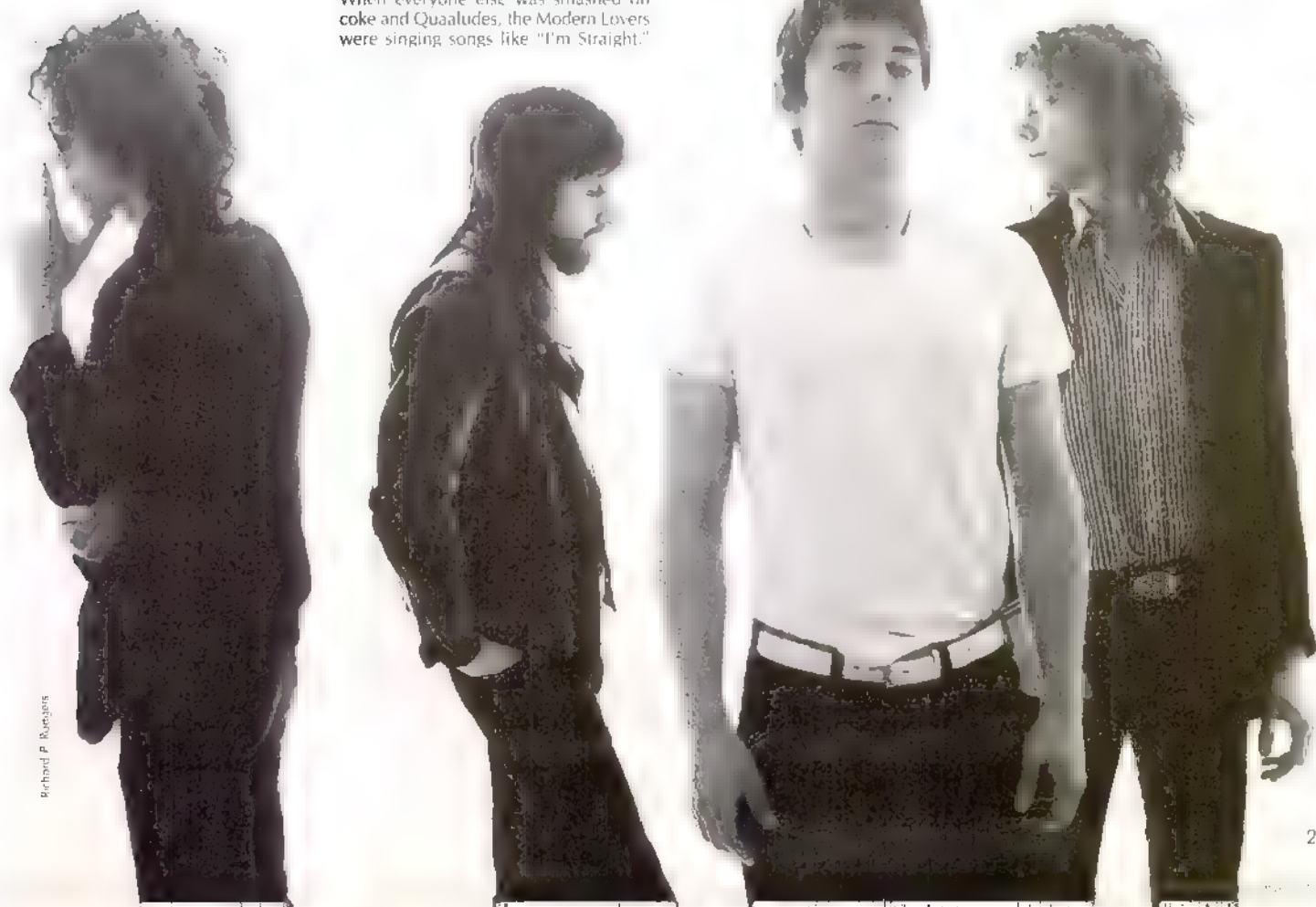
"First I go to the room where they keep the Cézannes, but if I had by my side a girlfriend, then I could look through the paintings. I could look right through them, because (drums) I'd have found something that I understand. I understand a girlfriend." ("Girlfriend")

How do you spell that?

"G-I-R-L-F-R-E-E-N."

Hey, Ernie (Brooks, bass). What's with Jonathan and girls?

"That's what he wanted. A girlfriend. Someone he could share his dreams with. Jonathan was one of those kids who was totally in his own world. He did not know how to talk to girls. He put them up on a pedestal. He'd visit girls up on the astral plane and visit them at night. Some of the girls he intercepts up there he may have known from other lives."



Richard P. Ruestgen

"Hey, Ernie?"

"Whaa, Jonathan? It's six o'clock in the morning."

"I entered her dream last night. I know I entered her dream. I... I don't know if I should have done that."

"No, Jonathan, that's wrong. You shouldn't have done that."

Jonathan was still a virgin. The girl who Jonathan wrote all those songs about ended up in the hospital. That's who "Hospital" was about ("When you get out of the hospital / Let me back into your life / When you get out of the dating bar / I'll be here to get back into your life"). She was sensitive. She understood him. "She cracked / I'm sad / But I won't... / She did things / I don't / She'd eat garbage / Eat shit and get stoned / I stay alone / Eating health food at home." ("She Cracked")

Before he was a Modern Lover, Jonathan was frustrated. Big dreams. No friends. He grew up in Natick, a Boston suburb, dropped out of high school at 16, moved to New York City at 18, worked as a Wall Street messenger and as a busboy at Max's Kansas City, hung out at Lou Reed's house, moved back to Boston.

DAVID ROBINSON, drums: I saw Jonathan for the first time, like everybody else, in Cambridge Common, at the Sunday afternoon free concerts, in 1970. Jonathan wore a white plastic Harley-Davidson motorcycle jacket. That was his trademark. People would say, did you see that crazy guy with the white plastic jacket? They'd introduce him as Young Johnny Richman and he'd come out and everybody would laugh, boo, and mostly ignore him. He was terrible, but he was also aggressive and wild compared to what else was going on then. A few weeks later he walked into the record store where I was working, with a little 3" x 5" card advertising a band. He decided right then that I'd be the drummer.

Jonathan didn't have a standard voice. He just wanted to show the world that anyone could do it. All you had to have was feeling. People thought it took courage to perform alone when you couldn't sing and only knew two chords on the guitar, but it didn't take courage. It was something Jonathan wanted to do so bad, no one could have stopped him.

ERNIE BROOKS, bass: It must have been in the winter of '72 that scenemaker Danny Fields brought *New York Post* rock critic Lillian Roxon to the Speakeasy in Cambridge to hear us play. The Modern Lovers were a little Boston band when her article appeared and suddenly all the record companies wanted to take us to dinner. Warner Brothers flew us to California to make an album. We went into the studio in Burbank and played all our songs. It was a little test, just a demo tape, but it was the only recording we ever finished. Years later it ended up becoming our first album.

JERRY HARRISON, keyboards: When we got back to Boston, we tried, through the summer of 1972 and into 1973, to decide what to do with all the offers. We were deciding between Danny Fields; working with Steve Paul; David Geffen



Thomas Corrallo

"I created Jonathan," says Lou Reed. "But I won't be responsible, like I did it on purpose. No way."

with A&M; and then Warner Brothers, who flew in a whole raft of managers. We had opened for Aerosmith, and Warners and all the managers had gone out to dinner and missed our set. We had a huge basement in Arlington where we rehearsed, so we brought them all back there. David's father owned a liquor store, so he got some liquor and we had an amazing concert. The managers thought we were fantastic. We interviewed each one for hours. We asked them what books they read and what they thought about this and that, but what we were really asking was what their morality was. We thought of ourselves as a cause and we didn't want to be ruined by something we thought would take away the purity of what we were doing. Meanwhile, we were destitudinally broke. We lived off record company dinners, which were once or twice a week. Once in a while, Jonathan's parents would visit. His father, who sold beef to army bases, brought along huge packages of Table Top pies and his mom brought a big fluffy sweater, which Jonathan had to put on.

ERNIE: At first we rejected the good managers, and by the time we realized we

needed one of those good managers, we proved ourselves so difficult, no good manager would touch us.

"Jonathan, Jonathan. I want to know something. Have you ever been to Bermuda?"

"Yeah, my band once played down there."

The Modern Lovers had a friend whose cousin was the musical director at the Inverurie Hotel. They alternated with the Esso Steel Band and the Fiery Limbo Dancers, who'd do the limbo with flaming sticks and rolled around on broken glass. Every time the Modern Lovers played, they drove the tourists out.

"Jonathan, what did you like about Bermuda?"

"Something in the air that kept soothing me down, making me feel better all around."

"What did you see?"

"I saw how stiff I was and I changed it just because. I realized how stiff I'd been and I didn't want to be like that again, in Bermuda."

Q: Where would you go on a dream date?

A: A dream date would be a date where

you spend the whole time dreaming. That's my idea of a dream date. It's night, under the stars. It could be right here. Or near Chinatown, overlooking the East River. A dream date would be trying to get closer to the dream. (Jonathan Richman, 1973)

Cohasset, Mass., 1973

Miss Christine, of Frank Zappa's group Girls Together Outrageously (G.T.O.s), was found dead this morning in the quiet seacoast town, where she was a houseguest of the Modern Lovers. Ernie Brooks III had gone to great lengths to rent the Victorian house, with garden and tennis court, from an ambassador who made him promise the band would behave and not use drugs, a promise the band maintained. Miss Christine, who had flown in from L.A., apparently with a pharmacy of drugs, overdosed her first night there. Within a week, the band had to move out.

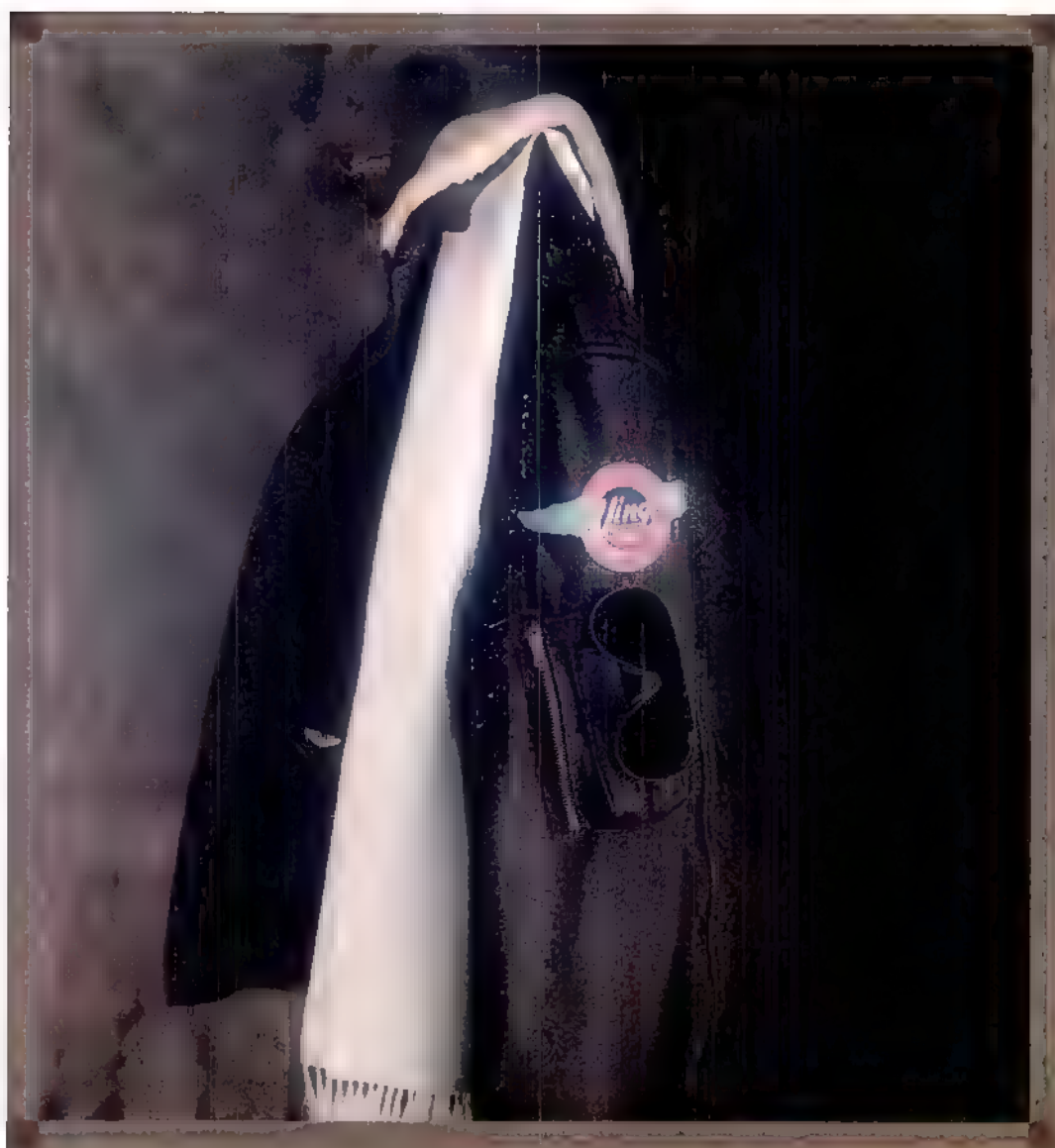
JERRY: We moved back to Boston and eventually signed with Warner Brothers. Warner had a reputation for being able to take on new and unusual acts and also rock 'n' roll acts. At that time A&M was doing Cat Stevens. That summer, 1973, we drove to California, to move there because John Cale, who was to produce us, couldn't leave his psychiatrist. When we got to California, we moved into Emmylou Harris's house in Van Nuys, which Warners had found for us. Almost as soon as we got there, things began to fall apart.

ERNIE: John Cale kept trying to get Jonathan to play violently. He'd shout, "Jonathan, attack! Attack!" But Jonathan didn't want to be mean, he wanted to be nice. Cale got into a big fight with Jonathan. We thought, "We got this far with this sound, why change it now?" Maybe Jonathan was growing up, but as far as we were concerned, this was causing problems with his music. We were still trying to do the old songs, "Roadrunner," "Modern World," "I'm Straight," and Jonathan was trying to sweeten them up and make them more acoustic. Around that time he wrote "Government Center," and "Hey There, Little Insect." Anyway, we started having these fights in the studio. Cale wanted to produce the Modern Lovers that he had heard eight months earlier. Then Kim Fowley came around. He had a lot of dumb enthusiasm for the new songs. "Make it teenage," he'd yell from the control room. There was no argument between Jonathan and Kim, the new producer. But we ended up not being that satisfied with the stuff we did with him.

Johnny Rotten: I don't listen to music. I hate all music.

Interviewer: Not one favorite song? Rotten: Oh, yeah. "Roadrunner," by the Modern Lovers.

LOU REED: I created Jonathan. But I won't be responsible, like I did it on purpose. No way. Like, Jonathan said if I bad-mouth him it would be OK because I only bad-mouth people I like. "Pablo Picasso, No One Ever Called Him an Asshole," I love it. "I'm Straight," that's incredible. One of my big mistakes was turning him on to Alice Bailey, that's where that insect



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IMPORTS

Something Salsa This Way Comes

Sometimes, when the injustices of your boss person or love object or the simple weight of the world is just too much for words, only music (and possibly HEINEKEN IMPORTED BEER) will ease the pain. You need to hear something snappy, something soothing, something sympathetic but not insipid. Something like salsa or reggae. You really couldn't do better than slap former Ruben Blades mentor **Willie Colon's** latest LP on the old Technic. *Tiempo Pa'Matar (Time to Kill)* (Fania) is a seductive collection of Latin groove things highlighted by two drum-driven *guaguanco* extravaganzas and "Gitana," a beautiful *charanga flamenca*.



Young Tenor Saw zipped to the top of Jamaican dance charts last year, and the new LP *Fever* (Blue Mountain) suggests what all the fuss is about. Saw here lends his determined, gospel-tinged voice to a variety of already familiar riddims, optimistically suggesting better times ahead.

BRIEF VACATIONS: British indie chart toppers **Half Man Half Biscuit** moan their way into our hearts with their Probe release *Back in the D.H.S.S.* (Department of Health and Social Services), a collection of funny, snappy social nibbles. . . . **The Indestructible Beat of Soweto** (Shanachie) is another indispensable volume of stately vocal music from South Africa's townships. . . . Australian group **The Black Sorrows** croon pleasant ersatz oldies that sound somewhere between Van Morrison and the Band on *A Place in the World* (Virgin/Spirit).

—Bob Cameray



ADVERTISEMENT



The Modern Lovers: (L-R) David Robinson, Jonathan Richman, Ernie Brooks, Jonathan's next-door neighbor John Felice, and Jerry Harrison. Background: the modern world.

song comes from. I said, "Do you know, Jonathan, that insects are a manifestation of negative ego thoughts? That's on page 114." So he got that. That's a dangerous set of books. That's why Billy Name locked himself in his darkroom at Andy Warhol's Factory for five months.

Around the fall of '73, Jonathan decided he didn't like electricity. Eventually, Jonathan decided electricity was evil, because natural resources were consumed to create it, which was unecological.

DAVID: Jonathan was obsessed and we couldn't talk him out of it. He wanted to play acoustic on street corners and at rest homes, and I was supposed to play a rolled-up newspaper by banging it against my fist. I was the first to leave.

"The band has to learn volume and how to play softer. At this stage, infants wouldn't like us because we hurt their little ears and I believe that any group that would hurt the ears of infants—and this is no joke—sucks."

—Jonathan Richman, 1973

ERNIE: Meanwhile, Warners was calling up every day to find out whether we had a manager yet and what was going on with the recording. Jonathan would tell the person from Warners we would finish the record, but when we went on tour we wouldn't play any of the songs that were going to be on the album. Of course what a record company wants, if they're going to put money into an album, is for the band to play the songs on the tour and help sell the album. Jonathan would tell the record company something that was calculated to upset them. Warners terminated our contract, and in '74, the band broke up.

Jonathan's still Jonathan, singing songs like "Chewing Gum Wrapper," "My Jeans," and "Vincent Van Gogh" ("the baddest painter since Jan Vermeer").

Thirteen years later, Rhino records, through Capitol, is reissuing the Modern Lovers' first albums. David Robinson is in the Cars, Jerry Harrison's in Talking Heads, and Ernie Brooks plays in a lot of New York bands on the fringes of what's called the "new music" scene. There have been many other Modern Lovers, but Jonathan's still Jonathan, singing songs like "Chewing Gum Wrapper," "My Jeans," and "Vincent Van Gogh" ("the baddest painter since Jan Vermeer").

He has a new album, *It's Time For Jonathan Richman*, on Upside Records. He would like his records to be stocked in the international section, next to Charles Aznavour and Maurice Chevalier.

ERNIE: In retrospect, I think Jonathan was right. Maybe we were just too uptight. We were into being in this cool rock 'n' roll band, and going "buzz, buzz" in the background of this cute little insect song ("Hey There, Little Insect") didn't fit the image we had of ourselves.

Maybe we should have followed him into his vision a little more.

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SPINS

Edited by Richard Gehr

Van Halen, the Cramps,
Naked Prey, the Meters,
Aaron Neville, Mark
Stewart, Faith No More,
the Butthole Surfers



Platter du Jour

Van Halen
5150
Warner Bros.

David Lee's gone, but Van Halen hasn't changed; Van Halen doesn't even want to change. Sure, they've toned down the bombastic synthesizers that mysteriously appeared on their last LP, 1984, and turned Eddie Van Halen's amplifier way up, but you know what? Those were Good Ideas. As Frank Zappa rightfully claimed, Eddie reinvented rock guitar. *5150* is the guitar epic the group was almost always about.

So why don't they just go ahead and do it? Just change

the band's name to the Eddie Van Halen Experience and forget about the recent past. In fact, let's give them a few minutes right now to sign the papers, OK? (And while they're at it, maybe they could erase Sammy Hagar's vocals from the record as well, because if they don't, you sort of will.) Smoke a cigarette, pop open a frosty Genesee Cream Ale, and meet me at the next paragraph.

You're back. Good, because from the first "notes" of the first track on the first side of *5150*, Eddie V.'s guitar kills small animals. Cats scream, horses bray, and critters the world over cower in fear of the awesome power unleashed by the little guy with the TV-star wife. Here's a cliché to snicker at: Edward vacuum-packs more ideas (about space, time, and the Dodgers' chances of a 1986 pennant) into a single solo than most other guitarists stumble on during entire careers. If a more consistently surprising mainstream "rock" guitarist is lurking in the shadows, I don't even want to hear about Steve Vai.

Give me a record that opens with a lugubrious song about a girl who's "good enough to huh!" and I'll be pacified every time. Fortunately, when Roth left he

didn't take the group's entire sense of what might loosely be referred to as humor with him: "U.S. Prime, Grade A stamped guaranteed/just grease it up and bring on the heat/Throw it down and roll it over once or twice/ Then chow down." Yum. The well-deserved hit single "Why Can't This Be Love," "Dreams," "Best of Both Worlds," "5150," and "Inside" are medium-tempo throbbers on which Eddie's unchainable guitar dances like lightning upon the world-famous Alex Van Halen/ Michael Anthony rhythm section. "Get Up" is the album's requisite headbanger, and "Summer Nights" its only hairball (these old farts don't need to sing about cruising for chicks at the local burger stand).

Like I said, a great rock record. I'm going to play it until my cockroaches die.

—Richard Gehr

Above: (The Eddie) Van Halen (Experience) is (L-R) Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony, Sammy Hagar, and Eddie Van Halen.



The Cramps

A Date With Elvis
New Rose import

In *Elvis and Me*, Priscilla Beaulieu claims that she spent her first date with the King making small talk over Grandma Presley's bacon sandwiches. On their second date, Elvis asked, "Will you come upstairs to my room?" *A Date With Elvis* is more like the second date than the first: it knows you well enough to take a few liberties.

The Cramps' first album in five years is familiar enough to please, offering the group's trademark surf/punk/rockabilly grunge smothered in Fender reverb (guitar-girl Poison Ivy Rorschach shore kin work that whammy bar). But the new Cramps have less edge. They've betrayed their retropurism by recording in stereo and adding bass lines to some of the

tracks, and none of the songs here approaches the psychotic fury of, say, their version of "Surfin' Bird" from back in '79. The departure of hallucinatory axman Brian Gregory leaves the Cramps somewhat less nasty, but they have gotten better at what they do best—humorously exploiting their obsession with Trash.

"There's more things in Tennessee than in dreamed of in your philosophy," cogitates Lux Interior, and it's downhill from there: "Shake that thing, I'll buy you a diamond ring," he sings amid the barnyard noises of "Cornfed Dames." Yes, here is the song about fat redneck prostitutes we've all been waiting for. Other titles: "(Hot Pool of) Womanneed [sic]," "Can Your Pussy Do the Dog?," and "Aloha From Hell" ("It's hot down here"). Not-so-innocent children à la *Children of the Corn* sing the chorus of "People Ain't No Good." "How Far Can Too Far Go?"

promises a woman that she'll be "queen of the tractor pull." Most of the women in the Cramps' Technicolor wet dream probably live in trailer homes with shag carpeting and lava lamps.

The ballad "Kizmiarz" resembles "The Green Door" but without the intrigue. The joke here is how the name of this exotic place phonetically resembles "kiss my ass," and it gets old by the third chorus; perhaps Lux 'n' Ivy intended it to annoy like a TV theme song. "It's Just That Song" parodies tearjerkers—Lux sobs and chokes until you just want to slap him upside the head. "What's Inside a Girl?" is the musical question asked by a boy whose father told him girls were hollow. To be in on the joke you have to like laughing at stupid. On *A Date With Elvis*, stupid becomes a noun.

—Sue Cummings



Naked Prey

Under the Blue Marlin
Frontier

A number of once-avid music fans hid themselves away during the Punk versus New Wave wars of '79 when everything became as fashion oriented as during the bleak Days of Bowie. All they wanted were good loud guitar bands that could write tunes, carry 'em, and do so in distinctly unmod threads. These ostriches only began to reemerge when the Dream Syndicate roared over the horizon in '82, and they were stirred further by the recent surge of Australians manipulating the Detroit guitar tongue. These boyos will be heartened by Naked Prey's new disc.

Led by original Green on Red drummer Van Christian, Naked Prey was assembled after Christian shucked his stool 'n' sticks for guitar 'n' mike. And though this band's an Angeleno construct, Van's (Arizona-born) throat has been tempered by the smoke of burning cacti as surely as Danny Stuart's or either of the Kirkwood brothers' has. But while those bellerin' genies are hell-bent on pushing their voices into gravel fields beyond their objective grasps, Van settles his pipes into a groove not too dissimilar from the one holding our era's prevailing AOR "breezers." Not that he's hopping a freight bound for Cougarville or anything, but Naked Prey's second long-player has a high consumability quotient.

The guitars here are in high focus and the music has evolved from the odd metallic Dylanisms of the group's '85 debut. "How I Felt That Day" has the malevolence of '72-vintage BÖC played at half speed. "Voodoo Godhead" choogles with the mindlessness of a Jim Franklin armadillo heading down Route 66. Perhaps the best track here, however, is the Prey's cover of the Stooges' "Dirt." Where the original sounds like Nembutal-packed dogs digging a tunnel through a mountain of rotten cowflesh, Naked Prey rearranges the mother completely, zipping into it with guitars that actually do stuff like "soar" and "sear." The (successful) notion of transforming Funhouse-era Stooges material into something even remotely uplifting is emblematic of the coolness these binks have a handle on. It's worth hearing.

C'mon out guys, soup's hot.

—Byron Coley

Above left: "There's more things in my pants than is dreamed of in your philosophy," sings leather-legged Lux Interior. We'll take what Jay has in the box.

The Meters

Here Come the Metermen
Charly

Aaron Neville

Make Me Strong
Charly

God and I are pretty good friends. When I lived in New Orleans, He used to visit me, or I'd walk over to the club the Meters played at and there He'd be, making sure everything was transcendent, epiphanies flying right and left. The Meters, led by Art Neville, produced the hardest sound I've ever heard; not the rawest or the loudest, but the most aggressive, the meanest, and the nastiest uncompromising mixture of no-frills, overdriven, bass-first funk and shattering-glass guitar metal ever. Pleasant was not the right word. The Meters broke up, unfortunately, to be reincarnated as the Neville Brothers, a bunch of castrati compared to the Meters. But it was in that form that Aaron Neville, one of the world's finest soul singers, who has knives (I think) tattooed on his cheeks and a unique, quivering falsetto, made his reappearance.

The early Meters were different from the later don't-mess-with-me Meters, at least on record. Allan Toussaint, who produced most of New Orleans's post-Fats Domino hits, made his reputation using them as his house rhythm section. The cuts on *Metermen*, originally recorded for Josie Records with Toussaint producing, are masterpieces of surreal and controlled funk. Toussaint set up his groups the way a stage designer sets a stage. He'd put a skanking guitar on the left, an organ wall on the right, a choir over here facing the horns, congas up front, and a vocalist tiptoeing his way through the maze. His mixes were visual, tactile, and the Meters fit into the scheme of things perfectly. They specialized in complete independence, with four instruments playing four different rhythms, all interlocking neatly. Each song is meticulously designed, with changing rhythms used the way composers change keys using tiny little guitar figures as hooks, without ever falling into clichés. This is probably the slowest, deepest, most understated, and economical funk ever made.

Before resurfacing with the Neville Bros., Aaron's career took a typical New Orleans turn. A hit or two broke out of the Crescent City in the early to mid '60s — "Tell It Like It Is" was the most famous, along with a couple of local hits and some strictly D.O.A. singles. But he still recorded regularly for Toussaint (the backup group sounds like the Meters; the liner notes pull a big blank stare on the subject), who, given the uneven production quality, obviously didn't spend too much time on the results. No problem. Neville's voice, with its milky, flicking, non-anguished falsetto, is one of the wonders of mankind. Even on the roughest cut, "Cry Me a River," on which he's backed only by a guitar, bass, and drums, his solitary, lonesome cry wavers with meaningful vibrato and pulls the whole thing off. Where Toussaint spent some time — on the incredibly complex uptempo pop tune "Struttin' on Sunday,"

for example — Toussaint and Neville create minor masterpieces (listen to the horn section quoting Coltrane's "Minor Blues" on "Hercules"). Neville's voice on ballads, fast stuff, and the gospelish "Going Home" floats ethereally, a product of black R&B and gospel's impenetra-

ble mesh, yet so distinct as to not really be a part of it. Aaron's rare on record; snap it up. Just like Toussaint and the Meters, he's an American original, nice to have around the house.

— Peter Watrous



Above: Aaron ("this side foam, the other side Edge") Neville, a cut above the rest. His voice is a solitary, lonesome cry in the wilderness.

David Laehr



Butthole Surfers
Rembrandt Pussyhorse
 Touch and Go

Moving Sidewalks
99th Floor
 Eva import

13th Floor Elevators
Easter Everywhere
 International Artists

Now that the head-banging/ear-bleeding stentorianism of the hardcore scene has been shelved by such pioneering punishers as the Butthole Surfers, it appears that most of the few helpful reference elements in its evolving cosmology have evaporated as well.

Or have they? Based on the nine richly rendered tracks on *Rembrandt Pussyhorse*, the Surfers' ferociously surreal new strain of pliable-core roar derives

less from Ramones-rooted brio than from a nicely skewered netherworld midpoint between the 1979 ZZ Top *Deguello* album and the 1966-69 psychedelic garage punk of the 13th Floor Elevators and the Moving Sidewalks.

Like the Buttholes, both the 13th Floor Elevators and the Moving Sidewalks hailed from Texas, the former led by alleged Listerine lush Roky Erickson and the latter by ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons. The folksy swagger and bare-wires spirituality of the Buttholes' new "Creep in the Cellar" ("There's a creep in the cellar/That I'm gonna let in . . . /And he really freaks me out/When he peels off his skin") is dramatically redolent of "Slip Inside the House" off the Elevators' landmark *Easter Everywhere* LP. Two other *Pussyhorse* tracks, "Strangers Die Every Day" and "Waiting for Jimmy to Kick" are solid keyboard-and-gizmo-anchored mortuary music with strong ties to "Pluto—Sept. 31," "Eclipse," and "Reclipse" off the revealing *Sidewalks' 99th Floor*

compilation.

While the Buttholes' previous EP, "Cream Corn From the Socket of Davis," featured chaotic blues braying by lyricist-vocalist Gibby Haynes that fitted more neatly into the standard Lone Star psychedelic-garage rubric, his singing on *Pussyhorse* has the loutish paranoia of the violently meandering Texas acid-rock tracks that comprised the best album filler during the genre's golden mid-'60s heyday. And there's more! Such as a sparkling cover of the Guess Who's "American Woman," boasting eerie squawk-box vocals from percussionist Teresa, whose drum textures with cohort King achieve a contorted hip-hop crunch that would make Arthur Baker blanch.

As for the jangled undulations and pitiless arpeggios that are guitarist Paul Leary's hallmarks, they achieve new eloquence on "Whirling Hall of Knives" and the turbulent "Mark Says Alright," the latter sounding like a pills-and-wine pajama party with the ghost of flight 401. The

biggest surprise is the liberal presence throughout of a highly agitated mystery fiddler.

Yes, the Butthole Surfers have come a long way since the Dallas-bred Gibby Haynes met Paul Leary in the early 1980s and they joined forces at San Antonio's Trinity University with King and Teresa. In between national tours, the Butts have issued three brisk-selling collections—*A Brown Reason to Live* (1983), *Live PCP Pep* (1984), and *Psychic . . . Powerless . . . Another Man's Sac* (1984). Not since Throbbing Gristle's *Twenty Jazz Funk Greats* has any punk outfit west of the Mississippi threatened such augustly spooky heights of uncompromised accessibility. Let the buyer be weird.

—Timothy White

Above: Surfer Gibby as viewed in *Splat-tlevision* (selected theaters only)

Mark Stewart

*As the Veneer of Democracy
Starts to Fade*
Mute

At the turn of the decade, Mark Stewart led an abrasive, didactic band from Bristol called, ironically, the Pop Group. Working with Jamaican producer Dennis Bovell, the Pop Group pioneered a jarring interaction among agitpunk, funk, reggae, and Marxist dogma. Songs such as "We Are All Prostitutes" and "Amnesty International Report on British Army Torture of Irish Prisoners" (not the Cole Porter classic) explored and generated more human suffering than the Gang of Four's similarly dogmatic funk. When the band broke up in 1980, some of its members went on to form Pigbag and Rip Rig & Panic, while Stewart envisioned reality through the Cuisinart mixes of "hearologist" Adrian Sherwood and sank ever deeper into Orwellian paranoia. *Learning to Cope With Cowardice*, Stewart and Sherwood's first LP, sounded like a combination of the Pop Group and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Their second collaboration, *As the Veneer of Democracy Starts to Fade*, finds them even farther removed from the realm of music and in an electronic theater of guerrilla news reportage. Despite a steady beat provided by the Maffia (Sherwood plus Doug Wimbish, Keith LeBlanc, and Skip McDonald, who cut their eyeteeth as the house rhythm section at Sugarhill when that label ruled the rap industry), the album sounds less like dance music than the end of the world. It's like the state police are in your backyard rounding up a posse with bullhorns while your television and radio blare static. It's a scary mess of random sounds, spoken words, and tiny snippets of music, processed and distorted to a grating, electric edge. Working with the manic zeal of a speed freak encouraging a paranoiac, Sherwood drives the sound insanely toward white noise.

In the Pop Group, Stewart's statements were bold but self-defeatingly propagandistic. On *Veneer*, he dispenses with singing almost entirely, resorting to looped chants and found vocals that, loaded with metallic noise, get the point across with the clarity of fingernails on a blackboard. *Veneer* works like malevolent autosuggestion; as it gets harder to make out the messages behind the warfare, the need to grasp them becomes more compelling. Even the old lefty chestnut, "seven percent of the population, 94 percent of the wealth," bites with new teeth in an acoustic environment in which the eventual demand to "pay it all back" packs some desperate credibility.

Stewart hasn't learned subtlety. He's just figured a way to convince you that the chips are on the line and you have to accept the facts, no matter how indelicately he presents them. However, *Veneer*'s bountiful but hard-won rewards aren't the polemical instructions, but the fascinating insights afforded into one sanely, severely paranoid mind. Plus the demonstration of just how far, using sounds rather than rhetoric, Stewart can draw you into his own paranoia.

—John Leland



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FAITH NO MORE



Faith No More We Care a Lot Mordam

I care a lot. And I ain't gonna play Sun City—not the resort community in South Africa or the retirement community in Arizona either. Not me—I care a lot. I am, after all, the world.

Same goes for Faith No More, but double. They care a lot. They care a lot. It's a dirty job but someone's gotta do it. If they don't care, who will? You? Lionel Richie? Not very goddamn likely, is it?

Sadly, I missed the epoch-making post-Grammy sessions for this history-assembling record, which puts me in sort of a tough position for writing the official authorized book version and then complaining bitterly when the era-establishing single/album/video/event is clutched to the humble hearts of millions but

spurned by the hardened hearts of critics and so on, but I'll sure do my best. Besides, Kim Carnes and everybody else ever managed by the sainted Ken Kragen were all on hand to lend moral authority, so maybe I'll just ask them how it went down. We care a lot. Which is more than we can say about you, you apathetic cynic you.

Hey! Here come Kim 'n' Ken right now! Kim, would you care to fill us in on the experience of the making of the We Care a Lot album/event/T-shirt? "Well, what really struck me about Faith No More, aside from the obvious depth of their concern, is that they sound like a fresh and unstudied aggregate of the crunch-rock verities—like the Stooges and Sabbath and even the MC5, but already schooled in the pragmatics of arena rock. And, of course, they care a lot. That goes without saying."

Gee, thanks, Kim. Say, if your career should ever cool down from its current poker-hot peak, you might want to give us a jingle over at SPIN and sign up to do a few album reviews. You seem to have quite a knack for this sort of thing. What about you, Ken? Any advice to Faith No More on the distribution of funds from this millenium-establishing LP?

"To be quite frank about it, Bart, I feel that the distribution of funds is a far less essential matter than the empowering affirmation that one who cares a lot receives from the organization of a truly significant event like Live Aid or the We Care a Lot sessions. My strongest concern is ultimately with my own personal re-



Erich Mueller

sponsibility to generate the special life-affirming communion of empowered spirits that takes place when rock stars and movie stars and TV stars join together with the press to announce my latest fund-raising event, Hands Up, America. I care a lot, naturally, and so I can't tell you how pleased I am to see that young bands like Faith No More have learned so much from our own concern and have developed their own logo and stage backdrop and tastefully silk-screened T-shirts far in advance of the event-created de-

mand. My only advice to the boys is just to keep carving out those extra-crunchy riffs. Speaking for both Kim and myself, I think I can easily say, we care a lot."

—Bart Bull

Above: Keeping the Faith (and caring a whole heck of a lot) are (L-R) James B. Martin, Bill Gould, Chuck Mosley, and Mike Bordin.

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THE SOURCE

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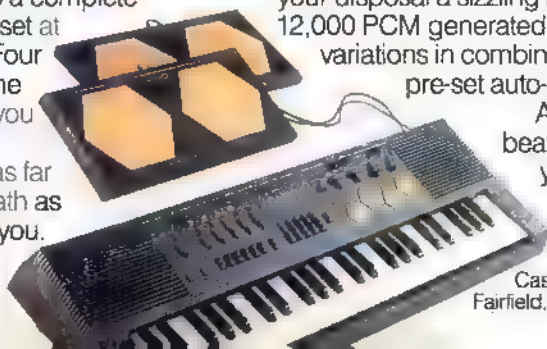


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UNDERGROUND

Column by Andrea 'Enthal

Polyvinyl chloride and new frontiers—These are the writings of the column Underground. Its monthly mission: to seek out small labels and unknown bands; to boldly review what no critic would touch before.



Kent Kolamar

The Mighty Ballistics Hi-Power make echo rock on their album *Here Come the Blues*. It's dreamily majestic music floating in a pool of swirling repetitions—like tape bleed-through amplified to the hundredth power. The Ballistics' primary instrument is the recording studio, to which they bring black blues banjo, electric and acoustic guitars, and some of the saddest electric keyboards this side of hell. Technically, their music is reggae, because it incorporates Jamaica's traditional lope-along beat. But the Ballistics' flatly whispered and scratchily intoned vocals take their pedigree from latter-day punks, not rastas, and the keyboard that perks and burbles in calliope bubbles on "Francos Fleet Street" owes as much to the Farfisa sound of the mid-'60s as it does to the bouncy tropical sunshine of ska.

If you let Einstürzende Neubauten loose in your kitchen to brew tea, they might sound like the percussion on "New Face in Hell," a clatter of clanging kitchen cutlery in which every cabinet is explored for an elusive kettle, cup, and spoon. But it's the title track, "Here Come the Blues," that crashes into your consciousness with mallet and spike. Timelessly chilling, it opens with a tilting group hum—a defiant chorus, innocuously sinister, with roots centuries deep. Like the prison gang leader who starts a riot by tapping his fork against his plate, the hum seems innocent enough. But within that innocence is a dark foreboding, like the first pigeon you see after watching *The Birds*. It's a spiritual hum, lifted from black gospel, beaten down, battered, but infused with The Dream. Sweetly and softly the chain gang hums its wavery unity as the crash of heavy steel mallets punctuates every bar. That crash is a hard, clear shock of a sound, lightly driven home with its own layer of echo. "They tell me Joe Turner's come to town with one thousand links of chain . . . ■ nigger for every link," interrupts the vocalist in his heavy British accent. Suddenly the song's off in a racing fury of high-speed strumming. Nothing trancelike or plodding in the Ballistics' lope. It's action dub from the British punk label Criminal Damage, 91 Swansea Rd., Reading RG1 8HA, England.

Proof of Utah is one of those homespun little bands that aren't supposed to exist in this hi-tech world. "None of us have ever been to Utah," they explained from their headquarters in Bowling Green, Ohio, when asked what the band name meant, "so we have reason to doubt."

If that explanation makes any sense to you, so will lyrics that find them riding mastodons and dancing the holy cow while Afraid Dog barks at thunder and the "brother of Miss Mona Bamen" reveals himself as the "leader of the Gobi claymen." "Those kind of things just pop into my head," says Louie Simon with a shrug in his voice. Simon and partner Bosco (really Mike Brosco) form the core of the band, writing the

tunes and lyrics and running their Smiley Turtle label from a corner of a bedroom. The rest of Proof of Utah is whomever Simon and Bosco want to work with at the time. Some of the people who perform on their album *It Doesn't Matter Much* don't perform live, and vice versa. "We started out almost as a performance art group. Most of our musicians aren't musicians at all. It's spirit [that we're looking for]. A lot of people could technically play the music better than the people we have, but these people somehow fit."

What they fit is another question. Utah has a wiggly guitar style full of pitch changes and overlaid with equally wiggly saxophones. Except for their frequencies, the guitar and sax are pulsing the same squiggle, an undulation that might be a rockier cousin to country music's twang.

Gentle, soft, and always lighthearted, Utah makes happy music. "Music," says Bosco, "can be humorous and not be lightweight." They've got a jazz cut that's just a hair off-kilter. It's what you might hear in a Holiday Inn lounge just outside our military base on Mars. "Dance the Holy Cow" is equally Martian, with weird cartoon-sound-effect spirals and more rhymes like the one quoted above. Proof of Utah is guaranteed to bore all trendies. They're unfashionably traditional, unfancy, and unaware of the latest fad.

There really is a smiley turtle at Smiley Turtle—he's a ceramics project that went awry because of a huge goofy grin. That grin is plastered across every aspect of Utah's work. They can be contacted at 228 Clough St., Bowling Green, OH 43402.

"They live in suburbia," writes **Terminal Sunglasses** in an effort to explain the concept of *Wrap Around Cool*. "Their parents are liberal [and] pay for their kids' expenses to attend aerobics school on the coast of France. They're always asking, 'How do you feel?' All their kids really want to do is drown their pet gerbils in the bathtub." Terminal Sunglasses' *Cool* is a comic pastiche of roots and jangle warped by every idiotic commercial that ever graced a TV screen. Guitars twinkle and glimmer in a relaxing fury, always soft and gentle, to sinister effect. Streaking with heart-palpitating speed but never thrashing, the Sunglasses' sound shimmers from one note to another like a pearl sinking slowly in a bottle of Prell. Other bands play the garage classic "Psychotic Reaction" as a heavy guitar workout, with lots of ripped and distortion-drowned chords. The Sunglasses' "Reaction" is dipped in psychedelic country, with a squeaky one-note harmonica piping in between lines. Twisting with motley swirls and churns in each "Psychotic" return, the song alternately spins and lopes to its end while the guitars giggle in pulses to match inserted Roadrunner "beep-beeps" when "the coyote finally wins." The Terminal boys munch on a Barbie doll for breakfast in "Eating Barbie's Feet." "My Cat Got Run Over by a Bus" is a cheerful little kindergartenesque

melodrama delivering a double dose of their just-folks spoken-word-ramble singing, as flat as the cat. If this is what a constant diet of old American TV reruns does to our neighbors, let's ship it to the world through Unicef. Until then, you can send "all fan mail, marriage proposals, and spiritual advice" directly to the band at 3424 Peel St., Suite 18, Montreal, Quebec H3A 1W8, Canada, and "all orders and lawsuits" to their record company, OG Music, P.O. Box 182, Station F, Montreal, Quebec H3J 2L1, Canada.

Cut the throb of a telltale heart out of ■ Saturday murder-mystery matinee. Add the single suspenseful organ chord that

joy as a ska/reggae beat languishes siesta-style under their seemingly sunny song. The D.C.'s come from the nuclear-free Down Under ground of New Zealand, where going "Go-Go-Bananas" is not about going to a go-go. It's a deceptively happy dance tune about what's left of the human body after The Bomb. The D.C.'s can be gentle and lulling, as in "Heaven," where Janelle Aston's high, sweet harmonies wrap themselves around Gavin Buxton's altar-boy lead. "They don't have politics in heaven," he sings to the accompaniment of a majestically simple acoustic guitar. "They don't have bullshit up in heaven . . . There are no landlords up in heaven / There are no cockroaches in heaven / For all we



Opposite: Proof of Utah pose with Mr. Happy Piano after the recording of their album *It Doesn't Matter Much*. Left: Too many nights of watching B-movies takes its toll on Orin (left) and Elan Portnoy of the Twisted.

sounds just before a word from our sponsors takes the daytime serial *All My Problems* away. What you'll get is the opening bar of the Twisted's "Sheez Wycked," a subtle, flowing slice of musical kitsch-in-sync made of meandering guitar with a loping woodblock beat. Slow and poking as a Valium-drenched version of *The Munsters* theme, "Wycked" slithers down ear canals in ■ wickedly steady flow. The Shadow's door creaks. A sniveling voice speaks, and our heroine squeaks a slivery, theatrical scream at the end of every bar. Gently, without as much as a single word, the Twisted pay tribute to every drive-in B-movie on this 7-inch slice from Midnight Records, Box 390, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10011.

"When the Big Bang comes, we'll all be talking backwards," chant **The Ponsonby D.C.'s** in a burst of Caribbean

know, at least I hope so." And they can be thumpingly happy, as when the same song bursts into trumpeting elephant hoots of trombone before it repeats its wistful start.

Son of Dire Straits meets Lou Reed ennui on "Queen St.," where Buxton deadpans his way through lines that include "I was constipation / She was diarrhea / You shoulda seen us / We were quite ■ pair." Lyrics are what make the Ponsonby D.C.'s remarkable. Their coupling of insight and humor gives their words a twist. Like Terminal Sunglasses and the authors of "Sheez Wycked," they're attracted to the daily nuances of pop culture, particularly the Aussie/Zealand culture, which they massacre with savage schoolboy disgrace in the heckle-and-retort of "G'Day Mate." "G'dae mayt," they begin over a sweet tinkle guitar and warmly endearing saxophone, exaggerating their accents like something by the New Zealand

Terminal Sunglasses' Cool is a comic pastiche of roots and jangle warped by every idiotic commercial that ever graced ■ TV screen.

tourism board.

Dancing. Prancing. Happily syncopated, and always with a joyful and intelligent humor bubbling under what they do, the Ponsonby D.C.'s are a band with a social message they want to share, not cram down your ear canals. A US pressing of their 45-RPM LP is available from Strange Weekend Records, 396A Frederick St., San Francisco, CA 94117.

Sacred Denial makes a rare breed of punk. Nothing generic about its thrash. Sure it has grubby, grotty vocals delivered on the edge of hysteric frenzy, and a pace to match. It couldn't be hardcore without that. It's also got a grated wall of guitar bordering an electric roar. But Sacred Denial has something else that would scare less visionary 'core bands. There's a piano on Denial's *Life's Been Getting to Me* LP. Rippling tensely out of a craggy scream to open and close *Life*, the piano is a shocker as it melts right into "Man in a Long Coat." The Man goes crazy as the rasping clips of machine-gun verbiage shift to soft, streaky whispers and piano flows. Sacred plays insanity as calm and silent, not louder, brasher, and faster, and the band understands how to make a slam soundtrack that won't bore through overkill.

Crisply and cleanly but not slickly produced, *Life* sparkles with a variety of textures, using vocal harmonies at one point and a sea of drone at another. The track "Sacred Denial" opens with a lonely moan of didgeridoo and builds its slam from steadily harder guitar, while "Sticks and Stones" starts with infuriated head-on force. Raging-hormones music never sounded so good as in the hands of Sacred Denial and its producers, Mike O. Young and Chris Walters. Reach them through 227 Union Ave., Clifton, NJ 07011.

If you're in an underground band I'm interested in hearing your record. Even if you're not in a band I'll send you my list of best/worst band names if you send a self-addressed legal-sized envelope with ■ thirty-nine cent stamp on it to me at SPIN, 1965 Broadway, NY, NY 10023.



You call that gospel? R&B? Hip hop? Folk? Country? Yeah. With a beat.

Column by John Leland

With the Grammys sham safely behind us, May promises to be a big month for the hip hop scene. In a gesture designed to give rappers the national recognition they so justly deserve, a few lucky wizards of the word will be presented with the first annual Herc Trophies, ■ coveted prize if I ever heard of one. The festivities will be held in beautiful Cleveland and hosted by Phillip Michael Thomas. So rent your tux early and stock up on No-Dôz, 'cause you won't want to miss this auspicious event. Yawn. Below find ■ couple of my picks for Hercs, the world's best and most unknown experimental dance band, an extremely guilty pleasure, a funky prayer, and some real roots reggae. And, you know, other stuff. All the hype that's fit to print.

A Flock of Seagulls: "Heartbeat Like a Drum" b/w "(Cosmos) Effect of the Sun" (Jive/Arista)

Beyond the realm of guilty pleasures there lie insufferable delights. Such is this pleasantly insipid single by the Flock. Every production gimmick you could ask for bangs you squarely in the head, then returns every 10 seconds or so for an encore. I mean the works: toy piano, string synthesizers, beatbox, metal guitar, and even those incredibly corny electronic drum fills. This makes "Alive and Kicking" sound like *Nebraska*. But the song dances on a pretty irresistible teenybopper hook that's bubblegum enough to deflate any studio excesses. This is everything the Bowie single should have been: teen innocence as a knowing front, youth culture as a marketing strategy. An artifact about desire that shows no traces of lust,

the song is nothing if not self-aware. If the Flock were capable of irony, they'd be Scritti Politti. But as things stand, this is proof that greed is the mother of invention.

Joeski Love: "Pee-Wee's Dance" (Vintertainment)

As the hip hop scene moves farther from the downtown crossover of the early '80s—still without radio support—it's beginning to resemble the race market of the '50s: segmented and extremely volatile. So what you hear these days on your neighborhood boxes are primarily novelties, sequels, and dance records. The Pee-Wee, as a successor to the departed breaking, is an unlikely dance craze. And as such, it's a perfect five-minute sensation, an in-crowd fad that will vanish as suddenly as it took the scene by storm.

But while it's here, you might as well get on it, 'cause there isn't a better new rap single to be found anywhere. Over an electronic splash of "Tequila," Joeski Love (Joe Roper) runs down his tribute to the patron saint of stupid, Pee-Wee Herman. Key points for aspiring Pee-Wees: "jump around, act like a fool," and "don't forget to act five years old." If you've got it, "Now you look like Pee-Wee Herman / How do you feel?" Well?

Tramaine: "In the Morning Time" (A&M)

In theory this is a gospel record. What do I know from gospel? It's got lyrics about God, and Tramaine married into the Hawkins Family, so I suppose it is. But if "In the Morning Time" is aimed at the spirit, my soul is in worse shape than I thought. 'Cause this sounds to me like a

lean and wicked funk groove, trimmed to the essentials and exploding with drums and Tramine's piercing voice. Change "Sing hallelujah" to "Say hey, mother-fucker" in a couple of key places (what am I saying?), and it's a killer dance track without the upwardly mobile urban-contempo glitz. Besides, the 12-inch presents four mixes of the song, and although I've never been to a revival meeting, I doubt the DJs at such an affair work the floor with dub sides. It may be religious, but this straight-up rock is a delicious pagan treat.

Grandmaster Flash: "Style (Peter Gunn Theme)" (Elektra)

This is the way they used to do it back in the Sugarhill days. Juice up a cover for the backing track, and let the world know who and how cool you are. Each MC begins his grandstand turn on the mike by shouting his name and running down his sex appeal. The rappers do it in the old style, shouting it out in a meter that's closer to James Brown than to LL Cool J and catchier hookwise than the current stuff. After a slew of self-indulgent, unfocused singles with Elektra (not counting the brilliantly loopy "Larry's Dance Theme") Flash and crew seem to have returned to what they do best. It won't quite stand next to the vintage stuff, 'cause the Sugarhill house band was unbeatable, and the current Flash still ails without the smarts of Melle Mel. But this is an inspiring turn for the better.

Dinosaur: "Repulsion" b/w "Bulbs of Passion" (Homestead)

Young whammo-guitar punks from western Massachusetts, where they're as unpopular as they are everywhere else, Dinosaur temper their idyllic psychedelic near homilies with random hostility and giant hunks of noise. They're like a teenager at an uncomely transitional age: the world is theirs, but they invariably hit their heads when walking through low doorways. The other key thing about them is that they're really, really, really loud. Both sides of this single (the A is from their debut album, *Dinosaur*, the flip is new) breeze precariously through nonviolent folksy interludes, which inevitably give way to hairy blasts of undigested feedback and distortion. And both songs sound like the band made the riffs up as they went along. Which, if you're a whammo-guitar psychedelic band, is neither unlikely nor necessarily bad.

Whodini: "Funky Beat" (Jive/Arista)

They don't get the recognition they deserve (except, perhaps, from their female following), but the sex symbols of rap put out the best-selling album of the genre, 1984's *Escape*. Give a large part of the credit to producer Larry Smith, who more than any of his peers has managed to balance music with barebones beatbox directness. "Funky Beat," the teaser from their *Back in Black* album, proves once again that Whodini is at heart an R&B

group. A very weird one: R&B boiled down to electronic shorthand, with percussive electronic bleats where the horns should be and James Brown grunts breaking the computerized ice. As always, the new single sticks close to its story—Ecstasy and Jalil never meander through hip hop boasts and insults unless they're to the point. In this case, the point is that Whodini's DJ, Grandmaster Dee, can also rap. And as the bass-heavy groove moves, he proceeds to do so: "Last Fresh Fest I was rocking good time / This Fresh Fest I'm busting out rhymes." The 12-inch also includes a megamix medley of their past hits.

Tack Head: "Mind at the End of the Tether" b/w "Is There a Way Out" (On-U import)

If anyone's making more stimulating dance music than this aggregate, I'm not hearing it. Tack Head is the Fats Comet Crew retooled for straight-ahead beat action, without as many cutups and aural puns. Which means that it's mono-maniacal producer Adrian Sherwood plus the old Sugarhill house rhythm section. It's also the Mafia, Mark Stewart's band. Sort of a Mothership in a bottle. Of the three, um, concepts, Tack Head's is the least alienating and the most savage—music for tack heads. Just Keith LeBlanc's twisted beats and an ambush of spoken words and processed sound effects. The apocalyptic "Mind at the End of the

Tether" manipulates a found evangelist's rant over a double-density percussive assault. "Is There a Way Out" is a (probably fudged) scratch collage of D.St.'s "Megamix II: Why Is It Fresh," Run-D.M.C.'s "Jam-Master Jay," Pumpkin's "King of the Beat," and some other stuff that you'll have to catch on your own, all over a brutal LeBlanc beat. The Art of Noise never even came close to rocking it like this. But how 'bout giving bassist Doug Wimbish some?

SIDESWIPES

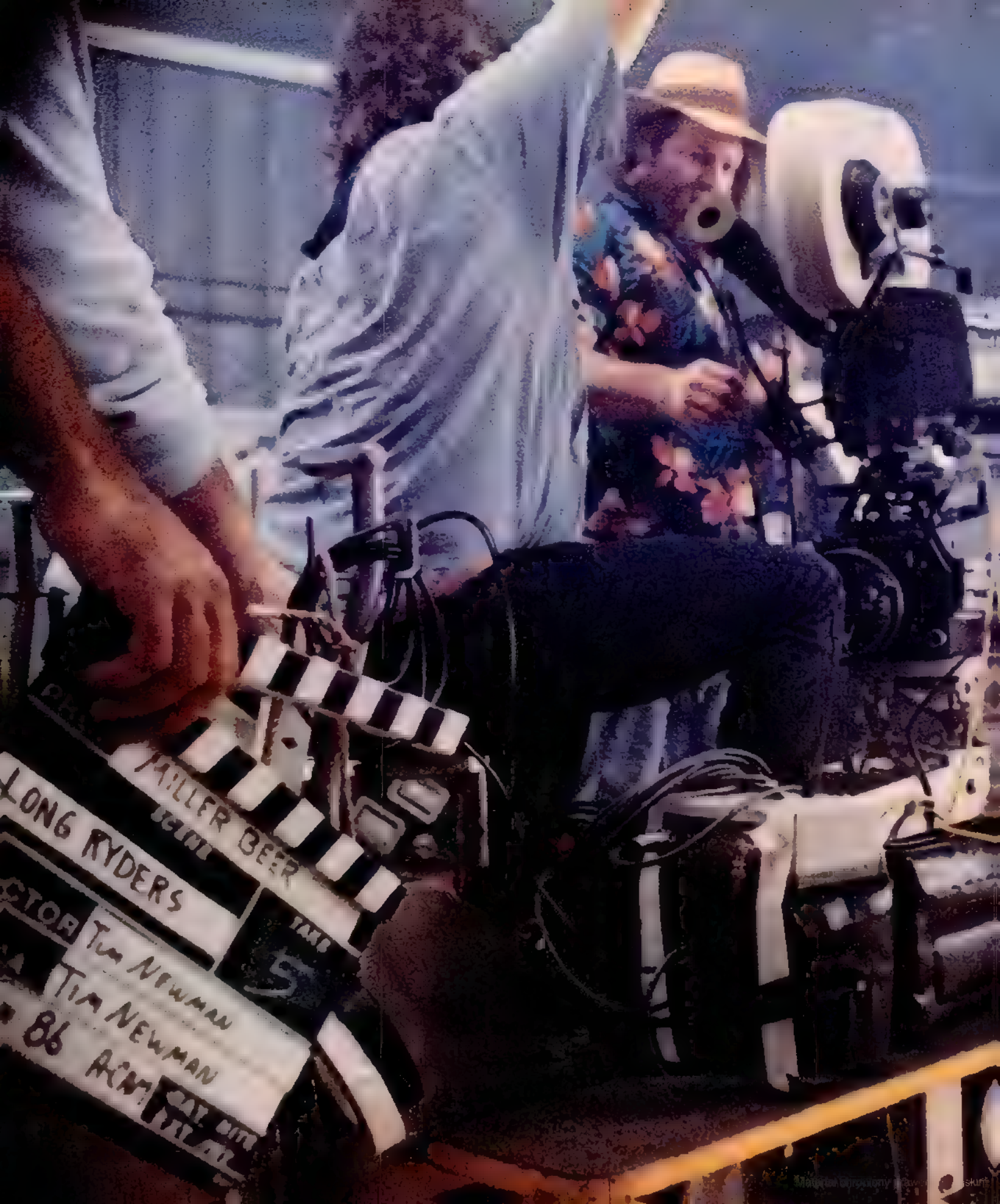
Producer Lenny Kaye gives James's first major label single, "Sit Down" (WEA import), a swirling folk-pop buoyancy that momentarily diverts your attention from the elliptical weirdness of the lyrics. Like a homegrown, more benign Robyn Hitchcock . . . the **Disco Four's** "Get Busy" (Reality) is a hardcore beat record that needs something—a hook, some clever rhymes, or maybe some mix manipulation—to put its explosive power to work. Otherwise it's a tough but not gripping cog in the subterranean rap machine . . . "Get Off My Tip!" by the **Masterdon Committee** (Profile) is a very traditional and very predictable domestic male/female squabble with disappointingly few left-field production doodads from Duke Bootee. A step behind Spoonie Gee's record of the same name and beat . . . those smashing hip hop stylists, the **Pet Shop Boys**, return

with a well-dressed technogroove called "Love Comes Quickly" (EMI) that doles out the usual wry fashionability, but adds the one vice they've until now spared us: singing. No kidding, even if you think Roland Gift is Otis Redding reincarnate, you won't buy Neil Tennant as a soul man . . . "Revival Time" by **Chalice** (CTS), long a hit record in Jamaica, is a born-again hoedown with reggae rhythms and—honestly—C&W-influenced singing. Winningly odd, but you probably have to go to Jamaica or at least Brooklyn to get it . . . the mutant one-man rockabilly of **Hasil Adkins's** out-of-key, out-of-this-world "Haze's House Party" EP (Norton) sounds like authentic mountain man music, a raw soundtrack for incest and tender bestiality. In super lo-fi, a must for Screamin' Jay fans . . . "Fat Girls" by the male **Profits of Doom** (Fantasy) isn't as funny as it should be—cretinism oughta have its price—but like good Fat Boys material, it's catchy and light-hearted hip hop pop. I'm waiting to hear the girls' answer . . . **Kid Creole and the Coconuts's** "Caroline Was a Drop-Out" (Sire) is their darkest and sharpest pan-American groove thing in a while. And if it is a bit mean-spirited, its slinky sleaze at least keeps it free of all aspirations to bourgeois elegance. Which means it rocks, especially on the long version . . . **Newcleus's** "Na Na Beat" (Sunnyview) finds the crew still unable to recapture the juvenile electropunk of "Jam on It."

Opposite: Mike Score of *A Flock of Seagulls* in search of new production gimmicks. Tack Head (jumping for joy, right) keep it simple—and savage.



Leo Houn



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TAKES 5
STORY TIA NEWMAN
TIA NEWMAN
86 AC
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IDOL CHATTER

Punk rock means
never having to
say you're sorry.
And Billy Idol isn't.
About anything.

Article by
Annette Stark

Photograph by
David Michael Kennedy

It's hard to decide if Billy Idol lives in castles or dungeons—there's something subversive but, in a sinister way, regal about him. He's a punk who rocks out a big song, yells the rebel yell, and gestures loudly. Maybe he doesn't mean to come across like a maniac and a pain in the ass, but he's done nothing to tarnish the idea. One time he dropped his pants to heckling fans in a New York restaurant; another time he ran outside naked to greet some enthusiastic followers and, realizing he was naked, hung his backside over a railing. He claims he didn't realize he was nude until he was already outside.

After leaving England and his successful garage-punk band, Generation X, Idol became a big American star, and the years of excess really began. His first single, "White Wedding," was a big success. He was MTV's wet dream come true—the perfect-featured platinum blond dressed to the nines in pop-art bondage.

A lot of people missed the humor, but the album, *Billy Idol*, was a smash. So was the next, *Rebel Yell*, the perfect soundtrack for Idol's life—a defiant scream in the face of restraint, a restless and reckless romp trying

everything there is to be tried, doing everything that comes to mind.

Idol lives in New York, in a one-bedroom apartment with a bunch of guitars and a lot of books. He owns the best photo of Elvis I've ever seen. In his refrigerator are a couple of cartons of chocolate milk that suggest normalcy but do not convince.

He likes to talk, the source of some of the confusion. Idol will tell you anything you want to know.

So where the hell does he get off calling himself Idol? It was just a joke, a way of having fun with the punk-rock thing of giving yourself the shittiest name possible? Not interested in sounding like a car accident, a jungle disease, or a bug repellent, Billy Broad became Idol.

The guy writes great songs. On his next album, *Whiplash Smile*, he sings ballads, big dance songs, and my-baby-went-away-and-I'm-so-sad songs.

At a photo shoot, Idol is applying his makeup in the dressing room—a long, narrow space with a bathroom in the back. The photographer's assistant passes Idol on her way to the bathroom. "You can leave the door open, luv," he assures her. "I won't watch." For a minute, the girl looks like she's





thinking about it. She makes the decision; the door shuts. "But, oh, to find the woman who leaves it open," Idol complains, half-grinning, "and stares back at you while she sits there. Fantastic."

Kiss Me Deadly

I love it when somebody insults me. That means I don't have to be nice anymore. Like, this guy in Germany, from a punk-rock magazine, he had this tape recorder and he says, "Do you still think you're a punk?" And I said, "Yes," or something. He said, "Why?" And I said, "I've got punk-rock attitude." And he said, "I don't think you are a punk." And I said, "Hey, look." (Shows how he smashed the tape recorder with his foot.) "That's punk-rock attitude."

I was saying, "I hate you, and I'm going to show you in the worst way possible. Smash up your horrible little machine."

Nobody's Business

I like all of the rumors about me, really. They are sort of flattering, aren't they? It's incredible to find yourself straight one minute and bisexual the next, and gay the next, and then, Christ, he's actually heterosexual. And then, wow, I'm a transvestite or something. You find out the most ridiculous things through rumors. Like, if you go from L.A. to New York they catch up. And if I go to London I'll be there a week and suddenly someone would say, "You haven't got AIDS, have you?" and I go, "No, but I am just going to the toilet to jack up some heroin."

Of course, I use all the rumors, because I want people to be insecure. Some people. All of those business people should be fucking frightened. They don't think that I am anything much. I am not stupid and they should be scared of me. And worried.

Flesh for Fantasy

I have always been like this. I didn't do it to be a rock star. I did it to be Billy Idol because he is great, he's good fun, and is in a group and gets to do ideas and be exciting. Getting the chance and taking it is what punk rock is all about. And still being here is kind of neat. Because I am the person you never believed would still be around.

Vital Idol

One of my biggest problems is people don't realize that I have never worked with a deadline in my life. Since I am not rooted into one spot, I live an unregimented life, and nothing bothers me about time. I always think "No deadlines, only headlines."

Dancing With Myself

When you have things troubling you, it can make you fucking insecure. Because people have been telling you, "I'll always be there," and you've been working on that assumption. I always have an idea about what I want to do, but I still need support. This is my third solo album in America and a lot of my fans want it to be good. And so do I. Mean-

while, the manager stops having an interest. Me and the girlfriend were breaking up all the way through this album. It was like hell. But that's what I wanted. I wanted to live.

Soul Standing By

White people should make rock 'n' roll—that's white music. They can't really make black music because they aren't black. It's not because they differ as people so much as they each have a slightly different way of life. We have an unbalanced society that gives white people a better chance. Black people still sing slightly mournful songs about how they aren't permitted to do anything. And, unfortunately, it's true. But white people changed what they took out of the blues and turned it positive.

Live Aid

It was terrible. I couldn't even handle listening to it if I had been there. I'd be thinking, "Oh no, not them! Oh Christ, they are doing that awful song again." I would have gone crazy.

Besides, I wasn't prepared to do it. We didn't have a group. And I would have only wanted to do the new stuff, which wasn't ready. I have to feel the right reason for doing something, not just because people are starving someplace else. We did an

Above: Back during Billy Idol's Generation X days, he didn't have to worry about whether he still had punk-rock attitude or not.

album for cancer with MTV at the same time, but I suppose I got buried. It was a nice alternative, rather than trying to make a lot of publicity for yourself by singing one old song out of tune.

Heaven Understood, Part I

Christ was a punk rocker. Look at what he did to the Jews. And the Romans. They had to kill him, didn't they?

Heaven Understood, Part II

I kind of wanted to fuck with those religious people who keep saying I am an anti-Christ. So all of the lyrics (on *Whiplash Smile*) are religious. "Soul Standing By" and all that stuff. Do you know what I mean? So they can try and attack me.

Dead on Arrival

I can't stand heavy metal. It's anti-American. Disgusting. They haven't even got the brains to begin. It was fantastic watching Black Sabbath when I was 14. I was bored with it a year later.

I mean, I like heavy metal in the sense that it is big, and loud, and noisy. But those singers don't speak to me. And maybe they are making a new album. But fuck if I am going to buy it.

I don't want to sound like I'm afraid of the competition. I'm sorry if some people don't like what I say, that's the way it goes. Maybe they'll say they don't like me and then we'll get a bit of reaction out of them. You need antagonism sometimes. It gets the music going.

Gimme Some Truth

I usually laugh at bad reviews. But there is always something correct in there somewhere. And you have to go eekkk!! because reviewers aren't just going to get it all wrong.

You can't take rock 'n' roll at face value when you are writing about it. It's like if you have the camera and everyone wants you to take the pictures. You can't be in the picture anymore. You have to take the pictures. Once you must observe, you are no longer involved.

It's So Cruel

The great Mars Williams came to see us in Denver, and after the gig he came rushing in like something terrible had happened. And he went, "Billy, what's wrong with you?"

And I said, "What do you mean?"

And he goes, "You sang in tune. All the way through."

Ah! Because I had never done that. Isn't that a great thing to say?

Rebel Yell

The thing that links me to America is that they don't have the same prejudices here about my music. It's not, "Oh, Billy's gotten a bit American." On American radio they will say, "Elvis is the king of rock 'n' roll. He has melted the hearts of millions and will live in our hearts forever." It's great. In England they just say, "He got fat . . ."

I had some trouble at my house. I said to the policeman, "If this keeps up I am going to have to stop doing music."

He said, "Don't give up, man. You are doing a good job." In England it would be, "I bet you are taking drugs and feeling lousy. Go do your job."

It was nice to hear someone say, "Don't give up."



"I love it when somebody insults me. That means I don't have to be nice anymore."



David Michael Kennedy

Because I don't want to give up. I'm just starting . . . I'm just starting to get into leather trousers. I'm only beginning to learn what they are about.

Isn't it hard to wear all that leather in the summer?

Well, it gets me to sweat. That sort of adds to it.

1000 Punks

I went to a big rock festival when I was 14. Three days, 24 hours of music a day. Very old songs, and there were about three people dancing. It was freezing and you just thought, "I am sitting here with 200,000 people and I don't want to listen to this crap." They introduced the Faces and everyone cheered. Then this woman, Julie Felix, came out—she sings kiddie songs like "Zoo, zoo, I'm going to the zoo," and the crowd went, "Hurrah!" Then they introduced Mark Bolan and everyone went "Boo."

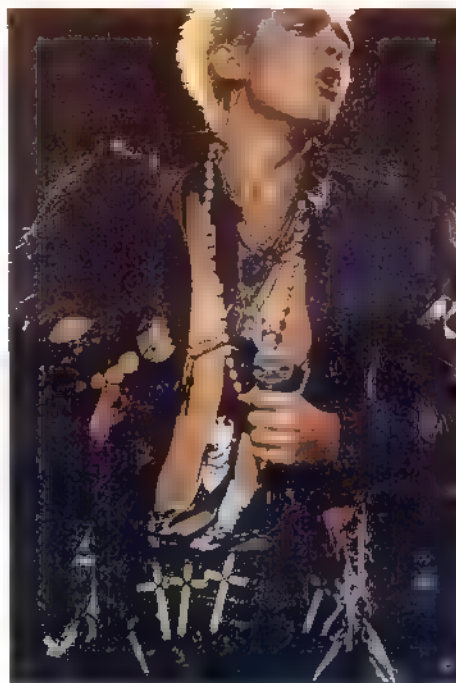
So old Mark comes out and says, "Why don't you fuck off?" Then he did all these great songs. And the audience was on their feet—he got a 30-minute encore.

The hippies never heard anyone for years tell them to fuck off. But what he was saying was, "Hey, you are all hippies and you're supposed to give everyone a chance."

He just did the punk-rock thing. And no one had done it before.

Do Not Stand in the Shadows

I guess I could try and be a skin-flick rock star,



Billy does the punk-rock thing.

"I can't stand heavy metal. It's anti-American. Disgusting."

and pay for it later. But that's not what making records is about. I'm after the best recordings. I want people to be able to listen in 10 years and say "Hey, still sounds kind of good."

With *Whiplash Smile*, I've had the usual things to think about. Like, "Christ, there's only five songs and they're all 20 minutes long!" We've been fighting the usual battles, but with no help. It causes things to be slow. I'm only a normal person. I can only write songs as fast as I can, which is not that fast. But when I get going . . .

You see, I just won't accept anything that is not what I would want to listen to. If I did, I'd end up hating myself. Sammy Davis, Jr. said that he made 40 albums, but he only liked four of them. And then he said, "I wish I had that studio time again."

I don't ever want to say that.

Man for All Seasons

I think real power is my own individual power. The power to be able to say, "Yes, I can do it," even if I am not sure that I can. You can't just think that everyone else knows more than you do all the time. Because they don't.

Eyes Without a Face

Who gives a shit if videos aren't very good? Or if they are a big copy cat? No one seems to realize that the important thing is that musicians are fucking with the film world. The reason why I split with my manager is that he wanted to do film production. Why would I want to be an actor? I'd be at everyone's mercy. I could never just take the script and stand there saying the lines. I'd want to be involved. I have that in my music, so it would be foolish to give it up.

When we were thinking about doing the film *King Death*, we went to Hollywood and they said that they would give us the money. Then we found out that they wanted eight points on my album. I only get 12 myself, and I give some to Steve. So that's what they really want. Rock 'n' roll's money and power! Hollywood wants our money! Let's stay in music and make them sweat.

Steve Stevens

He's the only one who understands why I am like this. I got pretty tired of hearing that Eric Clapton was God. If he was, where is he now? No one tells me he is God anymore, but if he is, Steve is the godfather.

The Dead Next Door

Hemingway's book, *A Farewell To Arms*, what a great song! In a song you can do what a novel does just by having the emotion that you are singing with. With music you can always get the meaning across, even if you sing out of tune all night. So I never think about making my lyrics poetry. I'm proud of their being lyrics. The hell with poetry because it's practically a dead thing.

Martin Benjamin/Picture Group



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JULY 1985 Sting, Nick Cave, General Public, Lane Justice, Touré Kunda, Beastie Boys, Muhammad Ali.

AUGUST 1985 Eurythmics, Billy Bragg, Leonard Cohen, Ike Turner, Sonic Youth, Midnight Oil.

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NOVEMBER 1985 Bruce Springsteen, Jesus and Mary Chain, D.S.T., X, Tom Waits, Miles Davis Part 1.

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JANUARY 1986 Debbie Harry, Mötley Crüe, Boris Becker, Punk's Tenth Anniversary, Frank Zappa.

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David Lee Roth/Kennedy

"White people should make rock 'n' roll—that's white music. They can't really make black music."

But I do love art. I just think that it's something unconscious. A painter gets lost when doing a picture, and that's what we do with a record track. We are not just thinking, "Hey, I hope they make my lyrics into poems." I think, fuck art. Let's dance.

Tony James

I couldn't believe it when I read that Tony [ex-Gen X bassist] said, "Billy's a bit out of date now." Meanwhile, he uses Giorgio Moroder, the old geezer, and I use Keith Forsey, the new geezer.

But it really was too bad. I was just about to send the telegram, "Great No. 1, Tony." Wow.

King Rocker

Rock 'n' roll gave me so much. A lot of people try to make it mean something different. Mark Bolan died, decapitated, wrapped around a tree. But he

left some great songs behind. And James Dean left good films. Because whether he was homo or bisexual, or whether he did stand on that motorbike outside the church when the other bird was getting married, doesn't really matter. It's his spirit we want to know about. I just think that a lot of people try to keep that spirit out of rock 'n' roll for lots of reasons. They don't know what it is.

It's hard to keep that spirit when you have to think about commercial things. Like, hey, if this record doesn't come out in May, will we sell more in June? With Gen X a single would get into the top 30 and go back out. And every time I would wonder about it they would say to me, "Well, a hit single gets there on its own." Now I can throw that one back at them.

Of course, I know it's not true. A good record does get there on its own, but it's a whole effort. Right up to the salesman thinking, "Good old Billy. Didn't just give us a piece of shit to sell."

I Don't Need a Gun

Ever since we stopped the Rebel Yell tour I've been fighting to stay me. I don't want to stop being a normal person. It's not good to be a rock star all the time. I'm a rock lone star if anything.

It's gotten easier because it's been a while since we've done any new videos. So I have been able to get rid of that tension and live for real. No one really comes up to me in the street and says, "Yo, Billy, 'White Wedding.' MTV."

But I know in a minute . . . it's coming again. ●

MY BEST FRIENDS GIRL



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Barry Marder

POGUES Gallery

Article by Glenn O'Brien

Erin Go Bragh-less: A liberated Irish punk band rediscovers its roots.

Last summer, Tom Waits asked me, "Have you heard of the Pogues? They're like a drunk Clancy Brothers. They, like, drink during the session as opposed to after the session. They're like Dead End Kids on a leaky boat. That *Treasure Island* kind of decadence. There's something really nice about them."

There sure is, as I soon found out from listening to their two albums—*Red Roses for Me* and *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash* (Stiff Records), and hearing them play in New York. (MCA recently released *Rum* and a new EP, "Poguetry in Motion," in the US.)

Yeah, they reminded me a little of the Clancy Brothers, but they also reminded me a little of the Sex Pistols. Although they play Irish traditional music—more or less—this band will blow you away. They're hard. They play with fantastic intensity. Seeing them changes everything.

It's not rock music, but it really rocks. Acoustic guitars, banjos, an accordion, a tin whistle, and a drummer who stands up banging on a two-piece kit. It's a folkie setup, but they could blow away any heavy-metal band in the world with that intensity.

I know that certain of my friends think the reason I love this band and play their records over and over has something to do with genetics. And I must admit that the jigs and reels ring some kind of bell. But it's a lot more than that—and if Poguetopia is a disease, you can catch it as bad as I've got it.

You might go around singing stuff like: "In the women's prison . . . there are 17 women . . . and I wish it was with 'em that I did dwell."

Or, after a few more pints of the brown: "My daddy was a butcher, my mother a madame, and my brother earned his medals in My Lai in Vietnam, and it's lend me 10 pounds, I'll buy you a drink, and mother wake me early in the morning."

The Pogues are something else. Every rock band in the world is playing Afro-American-derived music. It's as if the Pogues woke up one morning and decided, "Why rip off African culture when we can rip off our own?"

It's a rip heard around the world. And I hear that in the mountains of North Africa they're doing reels these days, and you can find giant black tribesmen around Mombasa who do a mean jig. All, as it turns out, is one. I fucking well knew it. But something's happening here, and you don't know what beat it is, do you, Jones-san?

I met the Pogues at one of their favorite pubs in northwest London. There was a pool game going on, and the band drifted in one by one. Finally, Shane MacGowan, the official spokes-Pogue, showed up, and he and I went around the corner to a French restaurant to talk for a while before we were joined by the rest of the band—except for bass player Cait O'Riordan, who was probably off somewhere with her beau, Elvis Costello, who's also the band's producer—and their manager, Frank Murray.

Shane MacGowan, the singer and principal songwriter, looks kind of goofy. He's skinny, and his

ears stick out at right angles to his head, and he's got the blackest teeth you've ever seen. Johnny Rotten supposedly got his name from his bad teeth, but next to Shane, he looked like the Crest was working. But Shane is a charmer, dignified and well-spoken, and after five minutes with him the goofy impression disappears in favor of an impression of hilarity and off-the-wall wisdom.

The Pogues may have an image of being drunken Paddies, but I can't recall ever meeting a more civilized band. They're wild and funny, but they're also more cultured than the Top 40 rolled into one.

Are you all from London?

Shane: There's four from London, two from Manchester, and two from Dublin—Phil Chevron, the guitar player, and Terry Woods, who plays concertina, banjo, and the cittern, which is a mandolin- or bouzouki-type instrument. They're both Dublin-born and bred. Then there's Cait, the bass player, Andy, the drummer, and me—we're London Irish. Spider Stacy, the thin little geezer who plays the whistle, he's a Londoner. And Lem, the banjo player, and James, the accordion player, are from Manchester.

How did you get together?

S: We were all mates, really. We all liked the same kind of music, which is all sorts of different music: blues, country, rock 'n' roll, Irish music. We all liked stuff with guts and melody and no synthesizers. We just got together and started playing in our local pub, really—the Pinder of Wakefield in King's Cross.

Pinder, after the Greek author?

S: No, I think it's spelled differently, with an e. I'm not sure what a Pinder is—it's a medieval word for a vicar or something to do with that. Pub names are really weird. Most people don't know what the hell they mean.

Did you all play in rock bands before the Pogues?

S: Nearly all of us had been in straight bands that never got anywhere, that you've never heard of, just playing around London clubs on a really small level. Philip was in the Radiators From Space. I was in the Nips—originally the Nipple Erectors. We were practically big in London for a couple of years. It was Cait, the girl bass player, who thought up the name, just to show that we're not sexist. The first record was actually on the jukebox at Max's Kansas City. Andy was in a band called the Staircase before that, which was kind of a punk R&B band. Then he was in a band called the Operation, a Cajun R&B-soul sort of band. They had a bit of a following in London, but they never got anywhere. Cajun music is having a bit of a craze in New York. S: It's been big in London with hip kids and rockabillys for years. I didn't know it was big in New York.

When did you first hear Irish music?

S: I heard it at home. I heard it when I went back to Ireland. My mother's family was very musical. They all either played or sang. There's a lot of that in Ireland. In London, though, the Irish music scene is

as strong as it is in Ireland.

There are a lot of Irish in London?

S: There are a lot of Irish in London, but also they run pubs, and they have Irish bands in the pubs and Irish records on the jukeboxes. In really heavy Irish areas like this, nearly all the pubs are Irish and have Irish music. There's loads of kids over here, some of them have never been to Ireland, but they still know Irish music. I don't know why we took off so quickly in London, but that may be half the reason. Even if you're not Irish, you go to the pubs and the ballrooms and you hear Irish music mixed in with all the other stuff. So you can understand why a band that was mixing punk and rock with that . . . well, that wasn't the idea, really. We didn't think it was going to get to this stage. But I can understand why people liked it.

Are English people anti-Irish? The Irish are the butt of all these jokes, like the Polish jokes in America.

S: It's like anywhere. There's a section of English people who are actually anti-Irish. There's a larger section of people who tell Irish jokes and that, but it's just a joke. But if you're talking about people who really look down on the Irish and treat them as maybe blacks are treated in the South, there's really very little of that. It's exaggerated. There's a lot of them around the I.R.A., but that's a different thing. There is a lot of racism in England, but the Irish get very little of it compared with other groups. You can't generalize like that. Some of the Irish are very racist, about blacks and that. Some of them.

When the Pogues started out, were you playing rock 'n' roll and traditional-type music too?

S: The same sort of mixture that you hear now. But you have no electric guitars or anything like that?

S: No, we started off with just an electric bass. The sound was always the same mixture you hear now. I don't really hear anything rock about it, but in the record stores it's in the rock section. Having great rhythms doesn't make it rock.

S: Well, it isn't traditional, either. We do use some rockabilly rhythms. But rockabilly comes from country, and country comes from Irish music.

Yeah, I noticed how a lot of your songs sound like bluegrass. I guess that comes from Irish music.

S: Yeah, the banjo and fiddle and the breakdowns and things, the reels and jigs speeded up.

Some of your tunes, the traditional ones, are American tunes, too. "Waxie's Dangle" is also a traditional American song—I think it's "The Girl You Left Behind," or something like that.

S: Yeah, they play it in army bands, don't they? What's a dangle?

S: Oh, God. The Dangle is a river in Dublin, right? It's a very old song, and it's a very old word that people don't use anymore. Waxies—I've heard they were the candle makers. I've also heard they were the boilermakers. I can't remember. Nobody really knows what the Waxie's Dangle was, but it was a pub, obviously, by the river. I think. It just means a piss-up, really.

I guess a lot of traditional musicians flipped when



you started playing. It's obvious that your lyrics are different, and you play hard, where a band like Stockton's Wing plays softer. But what is it that they don't like about you?

S: The traditional people hate Stockton's Wing as well. They also hate the Dubliners and the Clancy Brothers and people like that. They don't count as traditional bands with the purists.

So they hate it if you change anything or interpret anything.

S: That's it. But actually it's about half and half. Some of the traditional people think we're really great, but the half who don't, their basic thing is that we're murdering Irish music. We're corrupting it. It isn't pure, the way we're doing it. When a traditional Irish musician says traditional Irish music, what he means is a fiddle player or a piper who plays the old tunes exactly, almost in a classical way.

What do they think of the Chieftans?

S: Well, the Chieftans play exactly in the style that it's meant to be played. It's style. A song like "Waxie's Dargle," most purists wouldn't call that a proper Irish song, because it's like an old Irish pop song. It's like a broadsheet ballad. People sang it in pubs.

Have the Clancy Brothers heard you?

S: I'm not sure. But the Dubliners have, and they think we're cool. We met 'em at the Vienna folk festival. The Dubliners think we're OK, and we think they're OK. That was good, to find out that they liked us. They've got a fun spirit. They're into boozin' and all that. It's the sort of thing that the real purists object to—the traditional image of Irish people as drunkards and whatever.

All your press seems to make you out like that.

S: Well, that's the press. The same thing happened to the Dubliners. I'm not saying we're as good as the Dubliners.

I'm not saying you're encouraging that.

S: Well, we haven't discouraged it, either. I don't see what's wrong with people drinking anyway. Particularly musicians. Popular musicians aren't generally known for being monks, are they?

No, most of the ones who don't drink are junkies.

S: Exactly.

Your song "The Auld Triangle" was written by Brendan Behan. Did he write the music for that, too?

S: He probably nicked the tune. He didn't nick it, but he probably used an old tune, a traditional tune that anybody can use. Lots of people in the Irish folk style use an old tune and add new lyrics. That song was in one of his plays, and it's become a standard.

It started off in the play but became a really popular song, just like songs from *Showboat* or *Oklahoma* or *Hair* or whatever.

Do you know any Gaelic?

S: Just tiny bits. My mother speaks it fluently. She taught me a bit when I was a kid, but you don't use it much.

"Pogue mahone" is Gaelic.

S: Yeah, for "kiss my ass."

So Pogue is like Kiss?

S: Yeah, we're getting the makeup next week.

Actually, it means the "kisses." No, pogue is a verb. It doesn't mean anything on its own.

Have you played in Northern Ireland?

S: Yes, in Belfast and Letterkenny. I've been there a few times to play, and it's great. It's just like the rest of Ireland, really. And playing in Ireland is just like playing the best places in England.

(Spider Stacy and the other band members arrive.)

What's the instrumental lineup of the band?

Spider: The basic lineup is bass and drums—a two-piece drum kit, acoustic guitar, accordion, banjo, mandolin, tin whistle, concertina, cittern, and mandola, which is sort of like a mandolin but bigger and with a curved back. They're not all necessarily Irish instruments. We also use dulcimers, which are American, Greek, or whatever. We also have this bloke, Tommy Keane, who plays uilleann pipes, which is a uniquely Irish instrument. It's like Irish bagpipes. I suppose the whistle is Irish as well.

Shane: No, it's not. It's just a penny whistle. They

"Some of the traditional people think we're really great, but some think we're murdering Irish music."

never even made one in Ireland until about five years ago.

Spider: There's also the fiddle. There's actually nobody in the band that plays fiddle or pipes, but we have these two floating members of the band who play them. They don't play all the gigs. But they're on the records, and sometimes they play gigs. We use 'em when we can.

Could you say something about Cuchulain? I know he's an Irish hero, but before your song I'd only heard of him in Yeats poems.

Shane: He's one of the most famous Irish mythical figures. He's like Finn McCool. He was the champion. He was like Hercules. "The Sick Bed of Cuchulain" is about this period... well, you have to remember that he used to run around hacking people to bits at the drop of a hat. Nobody ever really beat him. He was a heavy kind of hero. He fought gods and things like that. And at one stage he got really ill, and that's what the song is about. It looked like he was dying, and all these birds that he knew, that he knew very well, gathered around his bed and prayed for him to get better and wept, and in the end he got better. In this song, he's like a modern-day Cuchulain who's fought in the Spanish Civil War and World War II and has been generally a pain in the ass to various governments all over the place, and then ends up as a drunken wreck in the King's Cross area, which is where the Houston Tavern is that's mentioned in the song. Eventually, he's on his deathbed, surrounded by angels and

devils, and he dies and gets put in a box and is taken to the cemetery and buried. But then he bursts out of the coffin and orders another drink.

Was there a real Cuchulain?

Shane: It's the kind of myth that is often based on fact.

Spider: If you're talking about those Homeric heroes, there's no actual documentary evidence to show that they existed. The only sort of proof is that Troy was there and there was a sort of war there.

Shane: There is evidence, but it's not conclusive. Cuchulain is as real a figure as Achilles or Hector.

Jem (doing a crossword puzzle): What's a Roman poet, four letters, third letter is i?

Spider: Ovid.

Jem: Thank you.

Shane: It's possible he existed.

Spider: It's more than likely that he was based on a real person.

Shane: They're more realistic myths than the Greek ones anyway.

They're more realistic than Conan?

Spider: I don't know. Wasn't Conan real?

Hahahaha.

Shane: Conan's name comes from an Irish hero anyway. One of Finn McCool's sidekicks is called Conan.

Did you consider any names for the band before it was Pogue Mahone?

Andrew: We did, actually. The Men They Couldn't Hang.

Spider: The Black Velvet Underground.

James: Those were the two main contenders.

The Men They Couldn't Hang sounds awfully familiar.

Spider: There's a group called The Men They Couldn't Hang who nicked the name off of us.

Shane: Yeah, we made the mistake of telling one of them that we were thinking of using that name.

Spider: It was before they started a group. He said, "That's a good name for a band. I'd better start one called that."

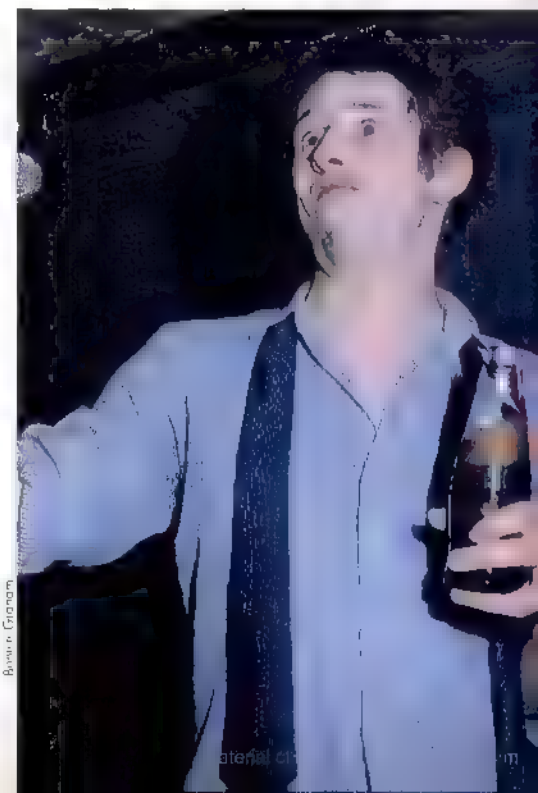
Black Velvet Underground is even better.

Spider: Now that's a song title. A song me and Philip are writing together.

Shane: You were writing it three months ago.

Spider: You can't rush creativity.

Philip: It's got to be coached and nurtured.



Above left: An empire of Pogues: (L-R) Cait O'Riordan, Andrew Ranken, Philip Chevron, Shane MacCowan, Jem Finer, Terry Woods, Spider Stacey, and (kneeling) James Fearnley. Right: Shane MacCowan and friend.

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MR. MAYOR

Go ahead,
make me
mayor, said
Clint Eastwood.
And they did.

Article by
Legs McNeil

Photography by
Allen Russell

Inside the conference room at the La Playa Hotel, in Carmel, California, more than 200 journalists had gathered for the story of the century—Clint Eastwood's opinion on public toilets.

We had come from all over the world. Employed by some of the most prestigious publications and news-gathering agencies in the world, we sat like a bunch of frenzied kindergartners at our first school assembly, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the four candidates for mayor of Carmel. Presented for our perusal: environmentalist Tim Grady, a 26-year-old drifter who had embraced every pop psychology movement, hippie cause, and Eastern philosophy ever to gain a cult following in California; two-term Carmel mayor Charlotte Townsend, a not-so-gay divorcée who resembles one of those mother-hen cartoon characters always screaming at Foghorn Leghorn for sleeping on the job; T-shirt baron Paul Laub, a clever huckster of the Milton Drysdale school of professional ethics; and Clint



wear it well into the night

pierre cardin • man's



Eastwood, the No. 1 box-office star in the world. It promised to be one helluva week in Carmel.

The reporters were divided into three camps. First, the American male reporters, who were all trying to sound glib and macho, making sure not to give away some gem of an insight on the situation. They all acted embarrassed about covering this election and intimidated they had better things to do. Second, there were the women and foreign correspondents, beaming with excitement that verged on orgasm. The foreigners acted as if the story was up there on a par with Elvis returning from the dead. And third, there was me, sitting there as the candidates filed in, sniffing the air for that smell of sex that you can only find in politics and Hollywood and doubly strong when the two come together.

Mayor Charlotte Townsend climbed to the podium first, looking every inch a sadistic high-school gym teacher. She glowered over the crowd, her big, beady eyes magnified to devilish proportions by her aviator glasses. I thought she was going to scream, "800 jumping jacks. Ready, BEGIN!" Instead, she took off on a tirade about defending Carmel from the evils of progress.

"If you esteem progress, don't vote for me!" was Mayor Townsend's campaign slogan, and she delivered it with such venom one suspected she meant to include life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But as she began to growl out a speech, the microphone wilted like some bad *I Love Lucy* sketch. She clumsily fondled the limp thing, but it refused to stand firm. Her rampage lost its fury. Poor Mayor Townsend, her first shot in front of the national and international press and she's made a fool of by a fucking mike.

Clint charged from his seat to the rescue. Pencils scribbled furiously as the horde of photographers scrambled to capture this brilliant photo opportunity.

Aghast at Clint's flagrant upstaging, the mayor fled to another podium before the photographers with hangovers had a chance to focus, and quickly resumed her spiel, boasting of commitment and dedication and duty and . . . but her momentum was lost. Every reporter was busy mentally composing a witty opening connecting Clint's heroism with one of his movies: *EVERY WHICH WAY BUT ON*. Poor Charlotte didn't have a chance.

When it was Clint's turn to speak, he started telling a joke meant to taunt the incumbent mayor—"The mayor has stated that the most asked question on Ocean Avenue is 'Where's the Hog's Breath?'"—but as he was about to deliver the punch line, he leaned into the mike—and nothing came out. The righteous Dirty Harry drawl that made scum everywhere consider their options was reduced to a painful squawk.

We all leaned closer, straining to hear. "That is not true," Clint continued. "It is 'Where are the bathrooms?'" Clint was hoarsely referring to the fact that there are no public bathrooms for the hundreds of thousands of tourists that visit Carmel each year. Personally, I felt Clint did a better job of killing people than delivering one-liners. But I couldn't exactly take him aside and say, "Clint, you schmuck, you're making a complete fool of yourself, you need help." No, it's every American's God-given right to make a complete ASSHOLE of himself in the political process, as long as he has the time, dedication, and compelling masochistic tendencies.

Norman Mailer once explained to me that his bid for mayor of New York City was a punishment from God. I wondered what Clint's excuse was as his voice rose back to mythical resonance, and he exclaimed, "How long are we going to wait?" He came back so strong I thought he was referring to laws yet to be passed on toxic waste or the homeless. But no, he was still talking about toilets. And we all sat there taking it all down, word for word.

Laub's and Grady's speeches followed, and the press listened attentively, hoping for some extra local color.

Grady, looking like an acid casualty, his eyes almost swollen shut from a bad poison-oak infection, pro-



Carmel is a scary place. It's like the whole town came out of one of those pods in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

posed that if he were elected, the streets of Carmel would be torn up and replaced by herb gardens. Needless to say, Tim was a dark horse.

Laub droned on that "change is inevitable" in a tone that had the locals worried that their beloved paradise-by-the-sea would be turned into another Coney Island under his regime. Paul's the kind of guy who can make money at an earthquake, and I wondered if he hadn't entered the race strictly for financial gain. He was giving away Clint T-shirts to anyone who bought a "Go to bat for Laub" shirt. Standing there at the podium, he reminded me of one of those television pitchsters trying to convince the audience that they too could become millionaires selling real estate with no money down. At any minute I expected him to pull out a map of Carmel and start auctioning off parcels of land.

Instead, Laub attacked the mayor, accusing her of "creating ice-cream hysteria." We were all ears now. Paul had drawn blood. He was referring to the central issue on everyone's mind and one of the reasons that Clint had been dragged into the campaign. Under Mayor Townsend's iron grip, the city council had denied an operating license to an ice-cream store on the basis of water usage, a lack of rest rooms, and the litter the ice-cream cones would create. That was the cover; the truth lay just beneath the surface. The mayor knew that if an ice-cream parlor was allowed a foothold in Carmel, it wouldn't be long before there was a pizza parlor, then a Wendy's, and then, SNAP, just like that, McDonald's, Burger King, Jack in the Box, and Taco Bell. Before you knew it, there'd be a video arcade, porno theaters, live nude dancers. Today an ice-cream parlor, tomorrow Puerto Rican drag-queen hustlers.

"First it's ice cream," interrupted Dirty Harry, defender of the American Way, "the next thing, it's apple pie and then Mom."

On that note the forum officially ended, and Clint was immediately surrounded. He fumed over the sabotaged sound system. "I don't think it's fair. All the candidates, whether they want horses in the street, or anything else, should be heard." He eyed Townsend with that killer squint. But she stared him back down.

Carmel-by-the-Sea is dead, man. It's the place where the Stepford wives spend their summer vacations. Located on the Monterey peninsula, 125 miles south of San Francisco, and just north of Big Sur, this resort town with a population of 4,800 is one scary place. It looks more like a little town on somebody's train set than a real place. A regular Mr. Rogers' neighborhood. No buildings over two stories. No pizza or fast-food joints, no parking meters, cemeteries, jail, or courthouse. No street lights, gutters, neon signs, mail delivery, or addresses on the houses. And worst of all, no live music allowed where alcoholic beverages are served. You could spend a lifetime searching for a jukebox. It's like the whole town came out of one of those pods in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and is still waiting to finish forming. And while tourists provide 4/5ths of the city's revenue, they are despised. Some xenophobic town official once even proposed building a wall around the town to keep people out.

As I walked around town after the forum at the La Playa, gazing at the honeycomb of quaint little restaurants, art galleries, real-estate offices, and T-shirt shops, I finally found the answer to that age-old ques-



he's running?"

"Why?"

"Why? So, I can hear what he has to say, you asshole!"

But I didn't say that. Instead, I calmly explained who I was and why I was there. Mr. Greenjeans immediately told me that Clint wasn't granting interviews with the *national* press. I explained that I just wanted to see him in a situation where he could respond to the questions of the community. He slowly fingered his appointment book like he actually knew how to read, while the blond in the back hung up the phone, licked her lips, curled a strand of golden hair around her index finger, and stared at the wall. All the while her mammoth chest rose and fell. "Breathe in, breathe out," I silently coached as I wondered why, if Clint had to surround himself with mutants, they couldn't all be like her. Just when I mentally had undone her last button, the dork informed me that Clint would never be appearing anywhere ever again. He ushered me to the door. As soon as I was out on the street, I imagined I heard him pick up the phone and inform the local constables that a skinny man with greasy hair was nosing around asking too many questions.

You saw *Firefox*, right? Well, I'm the real thing. I own two De Havilland Vampire jet fighters," said Paul Laub, with a gleam in his eyes that suggested that if he didn't become mayor he'd be making a strafing run over Ocean Avenue. "Clint's just an actor, but I'm the real thing."

Laub said that after he won he wanted to get Clint to play him in the movie of his life. When I asked why Clint should want to bother with the aggravation of being mayor, Paul sidestepped the question and said that it was the patriotic duty of every civic-minded, red-blooded American to run for office, as long as it didn't cost. Laub, a short, solid former Air Force pilot, still spent his weekends patrolling the western seaboard against sneak attack by godless commies. He looked like he dyed his hair silver to match his 1937 Bentley. Paul was always ready with a toothy smile for his public—what little there was—but he wasn't exactly the most loved citizen of Carmel. He had always forgotten to dismantle the Christmas tree lights on his country store, a feeble play, some citizens said, to make the store stand out. Laub countered that the Christmas spirit overwhelmed him.

"I know why people are calling me from Australia and London and everywhere. It's all because of Clint. But you know something about this movie star thing? It's like the first time people are just happy to be in Clint's presence, but the second time they want to hear him speak. But when it comes to speaking, I'm going to lead the pack. I'm confident that I'm going to win," he said, flashing his toothy smile like any patriotic, red-blooded American used-car salesman.

Paul's campaign cost \$16. Clint had already spent \$24,000. I wanted to ask Paul how much he expected to profit by his newfound celebrity, but then I didn't want to push this guy with the jet fighters. I thanked him profusely, picked up the check, and decided to discover just what had angered Clint enough to make him take a hiatus from Hollywood to depose Mayor Townsend and her cronies. The official story Clint was feeding the papers was that he picked up the *Los Angeles Times* one day and read a story about his beloved hometown, entitled "Scrooge City." The negative picture of his town so affected him, he decided he was the man to change Carmel's image. But the real story lay buried in the records at town hall. I would start by searching there.

No one had any idea where the town hall was. Of course, this was Carmel, so there were no numbers on the buildings, but I would have settled for a street. After the clerks in 12 different shops couldn't tell me where to find town hall, I gave up and called from a pay phone.

Nothing could have prepared me for what I found when I walked into town hall a half hour later. I'm

tion, "Vanna White, where do you get your clothes?" This place was a consumers' paradise for the gaudy, the kind of place where the contestants on the *Newlywed Game* went shopping for those Day-Glo beach-sunset masterpieces and "Foxy Lady" T-shirts. The people ambling down the spotless sidewalks, perusing the tacky clothes and shitty art in the windows of the chic emporiums, all had the vacant stare of the undead. Carmel-by-the-Sea—a sanctuary for all those mindless motherfuckers content to live in a world of shopping malls, elevator Muzak, retarded game shows, and *People* magazine. So why the hell was Clint Eastwood wasting his time running for mayor of this place?

Clint's headquarters was a vacant art gallery located next to his famous Hog's Breath Inn, where I was overjoyed to find the most luscious, blue-eyed blond nymphette wearing an understated navy skirt and print blouse with the first two buttons undone, revealing the healthiest cleavage I've seen in years. Surely she'd know why Clint wanted to be mayor, but before I could take a step to the back of the office where she was giggling over the phone, I was intercepted by a pathetic drone who was a dead ringer for Mr. Greenjeans, his eyes empty, his smile plastered on.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes, if you'd just step aside. I'd like to go to the back of the room and fondle that young girl's breasts to prove to myself I'm not becoming some kind of zom-

After a debate, Clint implied that the mayor had sabotaged the sound system.

bie like the rest of you."

But not wanting to spend the night in jail, I asked instead for some information on Clint's stand on the issues, hoping that might clue me in to his temporary insanity. Mr. Greenjeans looked perplexed. He looked around the room, the only campaign office I'd ever been in that was completely devoid of any printed matter, and then back at me like I was the only jerk-off to ask for a printed statement of the candidate's opinions, and told me that if I needed any information on Clint's bid for head honcho, I could find it in the *Carmel Pinecone*, the local newspaper.

"You mean to tell me you don't have any information on why the hell Clint is running for mayor of this zombie paradise?"

"No, it's a very small race."

That explained it, all right.

"Is the candidate going to be appearing anytime soon to field questions from the townsfolk on just why

talking central casting for Stepford-wife city. They even had those flowery print dresses the women wore once they had been transformed into obsessed little homemakers. I thought the ever-so-pleasant city employee behind the counter had found oneness with her Cuisinart.

"Can I help you?" she said, beaming at me like an est graduate who had just reached total perfection.

First we pulled out the documents on the great ice-cream controversy, but they made for pretty dull reading. Then I found something.

Clint had applied to build an extension onto the Hog's Breath Inn, and things got exciting. Clint didn't just want an addition, he wanted to build an entire office complex next door to work on his films. After months of fighting with the building commission, Clint's plans were finally approved, but only after two members of the commission threatened to commit suicide.

But Clint wasn't happy just to get on with his business. His experiences with town officials left a bitter taste in his mouth. He said there was a "negative pall" over the place and was off and running. The race quickly turned into the media circus of the year. Garry Trudeau had done some strips featuring Clint, showing just a pair of cowboy boots up on a table with the balloon reading, "If anyone needs me, I'll be over having a beer." And that was exactly how Clint ran his campaign, mesmerizing the ladies at tea parties during the day or bar-hopping from Bud's Pub to the Hog's Breath at night, always repeating that dumb bathroom joke. When he announced that he might be canvassing for votes door-to-door, the beauty parlors in town were swamped with requests for rush jobs. Every woman in town wanted to look her best when Clint came knocking.

Besides the walking vegetables ambling around town wearing out their American Express cards on driftwood clocks, the town was filled with television crews turning their cameras on everything that moved, blinding patrons in restaurants with their high-intensity lights, and sticking microphones in people's faces as they tried to eat dinner.

As I left town hall and walked back to the center of town, I was approached by three film crews inquiring who I was planning to vote for. I crossed the street when I saw a fourth coming and found myself confronted by the local hip contingent, a crowd of future acid casualties, ages 14 to 30, clutching skateboards, downing generic hallucinogens, and speaking in some foreign tongue that I thought had died with Latin.

"Hey, dude, gnarly leather jacket."

I looked around to see if the young man with the crew cut and purple tie-dyed T-shirt could be addressing someone else. But there was no one there but them and me.

"What's this gnarly shit?"

"You know, bitchin', rad, awesome," the young hippie nodded, a stoned-out smile on his face. The rest of the pump-house gang that stood vigil over the half-acre park in the center of town (where a large sign read, "No Frisbee Playing Allowed," proof of the "killjoy attitude" Clint accused the current administration of) looked as alien to me as I did to them. Scraggly adolescent beards, sheepskin Sonny and Cher vests, sandals, long skirts and hairy legs on the girls, and everything tie-dyed, making them look like the lost tribe of Woodstock.

When it began to rain, I invited them to my hotel room where they plopped in front of a Taxi rerun and gorged themselves on my meager food stores. They all cheered when the acid-casualty character, Jim Ignatowski, appeared on the screen.

"So what do you guys think of having Clint Eastwood as your next mayor?" I asked hopefully.

They were too busy watching Jim go through his stoned-out motions to pay any attention to me. Finally, someone dismissed me with a mumble.

"Like, wow, man, we're not into voting."

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Clint ran his campaign by mesmerizing the ladies at tea parties by day and bar-hopping from Bud's Pub to the Hog's Breath at night.

"Yeah, man, like politics are a real drag," someone else offered, then asked if there were any more potato chips. Fucking hippies, you can always count on them to be completely useless. Just before I threw them all back out into the rain where they belonged, a guy named Barry, the only normal-looking one in the bunch, introduced himself and told me that Tim Grady, the environmentalist, was a far-out dude and would make a better choice for mayor.

"If you want, I'll pick you up tomorrow morning, and we can drive around and try and find him," he said.

Dedicated to representing "every species of wildlife" if elected, Tim Grady lived in a tent on the outskirts of town. No wonder he was so infected with poison oak. Our first stop as we tried to locate Tim was at focal artist James Ogle's gallery, which doubled as the nerve center for Tim's campaign. While we sat and waited for Tim to show up, Ogle fielded calls from all over the world requesting interviews.

Tim soon arrived, and we left for some overpriced Italian restaurant where he spouted off about rolling, est, Taoist bullshit, and methane-trapping portable toilets for recycling the tourists' shit.

If Tim had his way he'd wake these bastards out of their trance! Steam shovels digging up every inch of asphalt. Cops blowing away polluters and citizens who cut down trees without a town vote. If anyone was to put some soul back into this place, Tim was the man.

I decided to throw in my lot with Tim Grady and he agreed to let me sign on as his speech writer in exchange for letting him crash on my hotel room floor. Since Barry had been sleeping in his Volkswagen, he came along too.

Hey, what the hell is that smell?" I gagged the next morning. Barry woke with a grimace and opened the door to circulate some fresh air. He pointed at Tim lying comatose on the floor.

"I don't care if this numbnuts is going to be the next king of Sweden, get him into the bathtub before I puke."

Tim woke with a sheepish smile and immediately started talking about the tribal customs of the American Indians and how he would incorporate them into his campaign.

"Tim, pal, when was the last time you took a shower?"

"Oh, wow, like I don't know, man."

"Well, maybe it's about time you threw political caution to the wind and went for it!"

Barry wrapped plastic bags around Tim's poison-oak rash to keep the infection from spreading.

"Christ, man, you've got to get the hell out of here," I said.

"When you run out of bread for the room, you can live in my tent," Tim offered as he dried his infected body on my nice, clean towels.

Across town, surrounded by loyalists, Mayor Charlotte Townsend's world was crashing as she wept, "Why does he keep saying mean things about me? I never did anything to him!" Inside the Hog's Breath, Clint was nursing a beer and telling a reporter that the first thing he would do once elected was play Frisbee in the park. Paul Laub was tossing in the towel, throwing his meager support behind Clint as he shrewdly realized T-shirts sales would certainly quadruple if Clint was elected. I heard a jet overhead and wondered if it was Paul Laub lining up for a bombing run.

I had to get the hell out of there. I picked up the phone and dialed a taxi to take me the 125 miles to San Francisco so I could catch a flight back to New York.

"They say that besides Australia, this is the only other place on the planet that koala bears could live," my driver rambled as we made our way out of town.

"They can fucking have it," I screamed.

Clint was lounging around a room in the La Playa Hotel with a handful of friends when he received word that he had won. The shock was too much for him. The realization that he was now mayor of this vacation wasteland finally awakened him. Embarrassed, he started to pace, then stammered, "I think I just pissed my pants."

jane siberry

the speckless sky

"WHO WANTS TO...? I wasn't really listening but put up my hand anyway."

"...WRITE THESE SONGS?" I looked up, everyone else had gone home.

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High Priestess



Anton Corbijn

Anyone can survive. But to survive as the reigning queen of gloom rock, as singer Siouxsie Sioux has, is survival indeed.

Article by Jon Savage

I first interviewed Siouxsie Sioux eight years ago, just after the Banshees signed their first record deal. Punk had just fizzled and postpunk's ground rules were being laid down. All five parties concerned still had a lot to prove, so we sat in a park by the Thames, muttering bleak manifestos at one another: It was very 1978. Somehow, I liked them.

This time we meet, just Siouxsie and I, in the more comfortable surroundings of Fortnum and Mason's Fountain tea room. Instantly recognizable, Siouxsie is just as poised, but much more amiable and—dare one say it?—professional than before. This is not to imply that she fades away into the tea-taking gentility; as we move to our seat, heads turn at that face, that hair, that jewelry, and such details as her skull-topped cane. Siouxsie splits a strawberry tart and muses, "I much prefer to be incongruous to a situation."

A certain incongruity and aloofness has marked the Banshees' course—slightly too willful to be called a career—during the last 10 years. In September 1976, Siouxsie Sioux (née Susan Dailion), Steve Severin, Sid Vicious, and Marco Pirroni (later Adam Ant's co-writer) stepped out of the Sex Pistols' audience and played an impromptu set—"Knocking on Heaven's Door" mixed with "The Lord's Prayer"—for 20 minutes. After one last minimal drum beat from Sid, the four walked offstage into punk myth: Anyone Can Do It.

Siouxsie doesn't think about it much now: "It was fun while it lasted and then it was very much a case of being hounded into making it serious. We were told off for being lazy." Yet here we are, 18 singles later, talking about the Banshees' ninth album, *Tinderbox*. It is a paradox that the punk group that enshrined the possibilities of the moment should now be one of its longest survivors and capable of the surprises contained on the new LP. Part of the resolution of this paradox lies in the quality that Siouxsie has always maintained, both in her work and in her attitude to worldwide recognition: a degree of distance, of otherness.

Despite the rhetoric, British pop is not dominated so much by the working class as by the products of suburbia. The Pet Shop Boys, Bryan Ferry, even the Sex Pistols... the list is endless. The two founding members of the Banshees, Steve Severin and Siouxsie, were both raised in the southeast London suburbs of Bromley and Chislehurst, a comfortable area whose isolation can breed strange ideas and fantasies. Before the Banshees, these suburbs' great gift to the world was David Bowie, whose influence on British pop has been incalculable.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, to learn that Siouxsie had an isolated childhood. Now 28, she was the youngest member of her family, 10 years younger than her sister. "I was left on my own a lot because my mother had to go out to work and there was no one else at home. From an early age I didn't like people very much, I was never part of a gang or anything like that. I was probably a bit mad: I used to talk to myself a lot and practice being Bette Davis on the stairs. I'd wear my mother's stilettos and use a white pencil as a cigarette—I remember learning to smoke just like Bette Davis. I must've been a little looney when I was young, but I was quite happy being left to my own devices."

Siouxsie's penchant for dressing up was already well developed by the time she and Severin, both confirmed Bowie-ites, went uptown to see early Sex Pistols concerts at the end of 1975. Both became part of the "Bromley Contingent," a name given to those early



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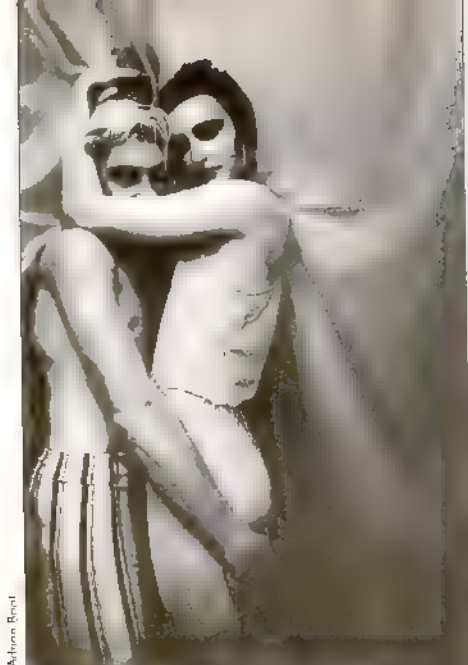
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Adrian Beal

She goes on to explain the genesis of "Swimming Horses," the best in a recent line of strong Banshees singles, a song of rare dignity sung around a falling piano figure. Siouxsie's slightly watchful demeanor dissolves in her enthusiasm for telling the tale. "It has to do with a program about Les Sentinels I saw on TV. The group is a French organization, mainly men, which rescues women from honor killing. In certain parts of the world—Greece, and maybe Morocco—if a man looks at a young girl the wrong way, the rumor spreads around town that they have kissed or slept together. No matter if it's true or not, the girl is maimed for life or killed by her brother or father. The custom's quite horrific. So our fascination for the bizarre is still there, but I want to conceal the identity of the pain and not leave it a gaping or a laughing matter."

Whereas early songs described altered mental states, while their performances described disturbance, much of their newer material has turned this outward, to impressionistic descriptions and stories of places they have passed through.

Left and below: Siouxsie and Steve Severin don't wear their hearts on their nonexistent sleeves.

"I was worried a bit as to how long I could be Siouxsie from Siouxsie and the Banshees."

On a recent trip to Italy, where Siouxsie is a household name, the ruined city of Pompeii—preserved in the lava that destroyed it nearly 2,000 years ago—caught Siouxsie's attention.

This approach has been an entirely successful resolution to the problem of survival. Indeed, survival—a paradox in punk terms—is another thing the Banshees have been good at. The core relationship in the group between Siouxsie and Steve Severin has continued since pre-punk days, weathering several changes in guitarists—including John McGeoch of Magazine—and several misfortunes—like half the group leaving in late 1979 and Siouxsie nearly losing her voice for good in

continued on p. 81

punks—other than Billy Idol and Sid Vicious—whose sartorial extravagances set the style for a generation. To this day, Siouxsie remains a vastly influential fashion icon: Her wild hair, stark black makeup, and black costume may be seen on any number of young women in any city. Although she disclaims a certain amount of responsibility, the "goths," almost hippie punks, are very much Siouxsie's children; they share her dream of something else.

Siouxsie reaches into her bag and fishes out a packet of cigarettes. Her lighter is a tiny Godzilla; flame erupts from its mouth. I'm reminded of how her otherness was expressed in the Banshees' taste for the bizarre, if not the perverse, which was much in evidence during their first days. Early in 1977, the Banshees seemed like nothing more than the latest sick punk joke, but with guitarist John McKay and drummer Kenni Morris, they traveled up and down England that year, building a large grass-roots following with such songs as "Make Up to Break Up," "Suburban Relapse," and "Carcass" ("limblessly in love" runs the chorus). They were electrifying: The three musicians redefined postpunk noise, while Siouxsie was unlike any female singer before or since, commanding yet aloof, entirely modern. Well-documented on *The Scream* LP, these particular Banshees described the theater of absurdity and decadence promised in Steve Severin's assumed name, taken from the S&M classic *Venus in Furs*.

Then it fell apart. After a lackluster second album, *Join Hands*, McKay and Morris left, two dates into an extensive UK tour. "We had to decide on *Join Hands* whether there was a group or not, and there wasn't," said McKay recently. It seems clear now that the tensions between punk possibility and the demands of the pop marketplace tore the group apart. McKay and Morris opted for Art and exile, while Siouxsie and Severin were left to pick up the pieces, which included about \$45,000 of potential debts. Here they showed pragmatism: within a week they had recruited new drummer Budgie, who had worked with the Liverpool punk group Big in Japan, and the Slits, and a new guitarist, Robert Smith of the Cure. The Banshees were reborn, but their initial intensity could never be recaptured.

Siouxsie's otherness became less confrontational, more impressionistic. The sense of the bizarre was still there, but as she admits herself, it had softened: "I don't know if we're any less fascinated by the bizarre, but I think the subjects have been played down more."



Adrian Beal

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Jackie Gleason Straight Up

Maybe everyone loves Ralph Kramden. Maybe no one loves Jackie Gleason. Maybe he doesn't give a damn.

Article by
Harold Rosenberg

Photograph by
Michael Tighe

FADE IN

The slenderized 215-pound body—Jackie Gleason's version of anorexia—fills a swanky, period French chair in a swanky suite in the swanky Beverly Wilshire Hotel in swanky Beverly Hills. The smoke from his Carlton cigarette twists upward past the red carnation in the lapel of his white silk sports jacket, past the gray pencil mustache, past the thick-lidded blue eyes, past the steel-woolly hair.

PULL BACK

We are looking at a show-business extravaganza of awesome punch lines and paunch lines, a legendary schmoozer and boozier (downing up to six double scotches per lunch), Ralph Kramden and Reggie van Gleason III roly-polied into one, up from his Florida digs to make a movie "about a man who is not a very nice guy, and he's still the same bum at the end of the picture that he was in the beginning." Seventy-year-old Jackie Gleason's enemies would call that typecasting.

To many, the book on Gleason is: great talent, great schmuck; fat belly, fatter head. They line up to call him a bum, a tyrant, a bully, Ralph Kramden without the heart. They say he's used people, then brushed them off like lint. "You should have seen the way he treated writers," recalls a show-business veteran who knew Gleason in the 1950s when *The Honeymooners* was TV's hottest ticket. "He treated them with disdain. He wanted no contact with them and wouldn't even talk to them. He used to make them stick their copy under the door, and then he would return it to them under their door."

"If I saw something in a script that wasn't realistic," says Gleason, "I would immediately dismiss the script, because I knew it wasn't the kind of thing we did. When you turn down a writer quick, he gets angry. But he gets just as angry if you stand there and argue. So it's either immediate dislike or eventual dislike."

One of these days, Jackie. One of these days, BANG-ZOOOOOM—right to the moon!

"Look," says Gleason, "being a legend's not difficult to bear, as long as you don't believe it. Once you believe it, you're in desperate trouble. People might expect me to act in a certain way, but I pay no attention to them. I don't work for free. A guy who runs around trying to get laughs all his life leads a very sorry life. It must be murder to be compelled to do that all the time, and it can only mean that the guy is insecure, that he has to get continuous response in order to be convinced that he amounts to something. I just play it cool."

"When a comic or an actor gets into show business," Gleason says, "he believes he is God, or he wouldn't be there."

"God" was born in Brooklyn. Life was tough for Herbert John Gleason, whose family was poor and lived in a tenement. When he was 3, his 13-year-old brother died. When he was 10, his alcoholic father

disappeared. When he was 19, his mother died. Jackie was no stranger to work, beginning as a 10-year-old rack boy in a New Jersey pool hall. He was a \$3-a-night acrobat for a Jersey carnival at age 13, and a TV star at age 36.

In between were 23 years of hard knocks, most of them as a roving comic. "I had to work hellholes like Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Bangor, Maine. And Alpena, Michigan, and all those joints along the Jersey coast," Gleason says. His audiences at the Club Miami in Newark were so small that he knew them by name, a friend from that period recalls. But that was nothing, *nothing*. "I remember working a joint in Allentown," says Gleason, "and after the show, when all the people went home, we would sit on chairs and throw bread out into the middle of the dance floor, and when a rat would come out to eat the bread, we would shoot him with a BB gun. That was the entertainment of our life." Another time, he challenged a burly heckler to step outside. The heckler turned out to be heavyweight boxing contender Two-Ton Tony Galento, who decked One-Ton Jackie Gleason with a single punch.

"So you suffered all of the hardships of working joints, having dishes thrown at you, guys heckling you," says Gleason. "If you didn't think you were gonna overcome that and become somebody, you wouldn't stay. You know you're gonna make it. You're gonna have that Cadillac. You're gonna have that big train to travel back and forth. Those are the things that keep you alive. But many a night I'd walk off the floor of a club in some small town and say to myself, 'What the hell am I doing this for? I could be playing pool. I don't need this.'" But he did need it. "You have to have an ego," he says. "Any actor who says he hasn't got an ego is full of crap. A guy who thinks he has the ability to go out and entertain 500,000 people and get \$400,000 for it and then acts humble about it? That's a lotta crap!"

Although Gleason has left his deepest footprints on television comedy, he also won a Tony for his role on Broadway in *Take Me Along* and played Minnesota Fats in the classic 1961 film, *The Hustler*. Since then, he's made 20 low- to middle-brow movies, including those *Smokey* and the *Bandit* films, his own *Gigot*, *The Toy*, and *Sung II*. He costars as Tom Hanks's crummy father in the Tri-Star Pictures production of *Nothing in Common*, due for release in August. In the 1983 HBO drama *Mr. Halpern and Mr. Johnson*, Gleason's costar was, of all people, the Great One of classic theater, Laurence Olivier. It was a TV marriage made in Looney Tunes.

"Comedy is 10 times tougher than drama, because it has an immediate critic—laughter," Gleason says. "You go out and tell a joke, and the result had better be there. But acting is a cinch. They make a big deal over it. Yet it's like the plumber who comes home with lipstick on his cheek and convinces his wife that he was bowling, and a broad bent over to give him a drink and

brushed him. He makes his wife believe that, so he's a great actor. Everybody acts. You notice there are actors who go to school, but there are no schools for comedians, because it's a gift. To analyze comedy is sure death."

Gleason was near sure death as a bit player in Hollywood when he was tabbed to star in the TV version of radio's *The Life of Riley* in 1949. Although the series quickly bombed (it would return in 1953 with radio's Riley, William Bendix, in the lead), Gleason was back on TV a year later heading the *Cavalcade of Stars* variety show on the old DuMont network, a short-lived competitor to today's big three networks. It was here that TV audiences first saw such classic Gleason characters as the Poor Soul, blabby Joe the Bartender, and that silk-hatted, caped, insufferably drunken dandy of a playboy, Reggie van Gleason III. And it was here that Gleason introduced America to a running sketch about a blue-collar couple called "The Honeymooners." Two years later, he was the 300-pound, \$10,000-a-week star of *The Jackie Gleason Show* on CBS. "The Honeymooners" became a hilarious half-hour show within the show, and the rest, as they say, is history: reruns, revivals, and sweet bucks.

The Kramdens lived in a dreary two-room flat at 328 Chauncey Street in Brooklyn (Gleason's own childhood address). Ralph was a \$62.50-a-week bus driver with a big mouth, a big temper, and big schemes that never worked out. Audrey Meadows got some of the best punch lines as Ralph's shrewd and sarcastic wife, Alice, who in one show wanted to go to work after Ralph lost his job.

Ralph: "I've got my pride. Before I'd let you go to work, I'd rather see you starve. We'll just have to live on our savings."

Alice: "That'll carry us through the night, but what'll we do in the morning?"

When Alice pointed out Ralph's failures, he would threaten to punch her out. But he was all bluster and inevitably backed down under a barrage of wisecracks.

Ralph: "If you were only my size!"

Alice: "If I were your size, I'd be the fat lady in a circus."

Art Carney was the closest thing to Gleason's costar, though, as Ralph's upstairs neighbor and best friend, guileless sewer worker Ed Norton. In Carney, Gleason found his scene-stealing match, and he shrewdly realized that a funny Carney made a funnier show and a richer Jackie. Gleason and Carney were gifted comedic actors who coaxed many of their laughs with body language. Even their moves had moves.

Besides being a howl, *The Honeymooners* was fresh and surprisingly insightful about the human condition. The emotions and relationships were genuine, and the characters wore no masks. Ralph was Everyman, a modestly talented schlub who was often overmatched by life, his crazy get-rich schemes a metaphor for the dreams of most Americans. He was America's official pop-up clown, down but never out.

The *Honeymooners* was canceled in 1971. "If I went to a producer today and told him I wanted to do a comedy series where there was no sexual innuendo, no jokes, and one guy's a sewer worker and the other guy is a bus driver, I'd be thrown out before I got started," says Gleason, sounding bitter. "If I were going to pitch a show today I would say, 'We got these three broads, and they all got big boobs, and two handsome guys live upstairs, and they ask them to come down and fix the sink,' and the producer would say 'Jesus Christ, we'll put that on next week.' But I couldn't sit down and say I'm gonna do a show about a guy named Reggie who's always drinking. Right away they'd say, 'You can't have



somebody who's always drinking."

For a moment, Gleason resembles a boiling Ralph Kramden just dying to deliver a knuckle sandwich to the nearest network bureaucrat. But he insists that his TV creations were not him. "There's only one guy I know who ever made money out of being himself, and that was Spencer Tracy," he says. "He was exactly the same way on the screen as he was off. But an actor's life is all fiction. Maybe there's a hunk of me in the Poor Soul and in Ralph and in Reggie, but it's a small hunk."

In alcoholic Reggie's case, the common denominator is booze, and not just a drink or two or three or four or five. We're talking boooooze! Gleason is a man who has spent his life consuming alcohol with style and artistry. A friend of Gleason's from the early 1940s in New York recalls that he used to run up \$3,000 tabs at Toots Shor's famous saloon. "I knew him when he was on his ass. I remember one time he took part in a drinking contest at Shor's. They started at 11 AM and finished at about 6 PM. Gleason got up to go to the can and fell down and stayed there. A waiter went to help him, but Toots stopped him and left Jackie sleeping. People just stepped over him."

Unlike most heavy drinkers, Gleason doesn't try to hide his lust, or soften it, or alibi it. In fact, he practically flaunts his expertise on the subject, as if lecturing at Harvard on the social dynamics of intense inebriation: "There are three things you can't do when you're loaded. You can't act. You can't play golf. And you can't play pool."

"Sometimes you drink to put out the lights, but there is no enjoyment in that. I drink to enjoy myself, and there is enjoyment in a bunch of guys—Bob Considine, Toots, myself, Mickey Mantle—sitting around a table having some drinks and swapping lies. When you drink, it removes the critical part of yourself, and you can accept people easier, because you're in a happy frame of mind. There is a camaraderie about drinking. There is also a point where if you drink too much, all of that disappears, and more criticism is there. Those are the guys who want to start a fight when they get loaded. So there is a fine line. If your body has been trained to quit at that fine line, you can drink."

Gleason has devoted years and countless cases of

"When a comic or an actor gets into show business, he believes he is God, or he wouldn't be there."

J & B scotch to training his body. "I never worked with booze except in clubs, though. I remember one club I was in. There were about six people in the joint. So I brought a table out to the middle of the floor and had the waiter bring me a bottle of booze and a glass, and I just talked to the people, and it was one of the best shows I've ever done. But drinking is for pleasure. It gives you courage sometimes, but false courage. Who in the hell needs that?"

Tomorrow's lecture: The art of falling down drunk without suffering a concussion.

You have to wonder what Gleason was drinking in 1961 when he agreed to host a prime-time game show on CBS called *You're in the Picture*. It was the Great One's Great Blunder, lasting only two weeks. Episode one was the premiere, episode two, Gleason's apology. "I've tried to blank it out of my mind," he says. "Here were these network executives, and between us we must have had a thousand years experience, and when this guy demonstrated the show to us, we were on the floor, saying, 'It's hilarious.' Then we did it, and it was a bomb."

The game called for an actor to extend his head through a hole in a screen and, from clues provided by Gleason, guess what was painted on the other side. "It was the worst thing that was ever on television," Gleason says. "The audience didn't give a damn. To see an actor's head come through a hole isn't very entertaining. If they did the show today, they'd have three holes, one for the head and two for the boobs."

Above: Jackie Gleason as Ralph Kramden, the angriest bus driver in the world.

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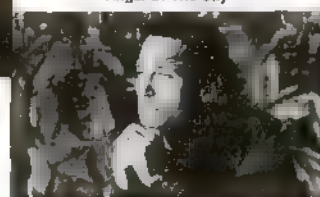
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That gives you an idea of what Gleason thinks about today's TV comedy. "There is such a disregard for class. I saw poor Burt Reynolds doing a sketch on *Saturday Night Live* that they did in a vomitorium, and every now and then between lines, someone would come in and throw up. That is not comedy. I swear to God that is not comedy."

If Gleason is no longer the king of comedy, he is very nearly the king of Lauderdale, Florida, where he shares a 14-room mansion called Glea Manor with his third wife, Marilyn, whom he married in 1975. Gleason seems determined to live up to his reputation as a big spender. "Nothing appears extravagant to me. When you decide you're gonna become an actor, the dreams are that you're gonna have six Cadillacs; you're gonna have tall, beautiful women; you're gonna have fame. Now, if you become a success and you don't have any of those things, then what the hell was the sense of becoming a success? A buck never threw its arms around you. It's for spending. Anybody who saves money is insane."

On a typical day, Gleason rises late, plays golf, sees a movie, and dines with friends. "What else can you do? What the hell else can you do except that?" Gleason also enjoys reading—a creator of stage, screen, and TV fiction seeking refuge in nonfiction. If asked, he pops off about topics ranging from AIDS to Jerry Falwell. "He's being very, very righteous, and in order to sustain righteousness, you must live the most miserable life in the world. You're always on exhibition. All of the things you say must have great truth and religious value. And if he enjoys it, he must be one of the exceptional people on earth, because no one can sustain righteousness every moment of his life." Gleason does like Ronald Reagan, though. He deplores South Africa and wouldn't play *Sun City*. He is baffled by the Creator ("How can God let all those people starve in Africa?") and by the creators of rock music.

Gleason crashed the music world in the 1950s by conducting 60-piece orchestras for a string of big-selling romantic music albums with such wistful titles as "Music, Martinis, and Memories" and "Music to Make You Misty." And now his world is crashed by music to make him miserable. "I've never heard a rock song that I could sing," he says. "The costumes are exchanged between the groups. One day this group will have the sequins with the thing hanging out, and the next week the other group will have it. It must be deprecating to a person when he sits down alone in his room and looks into the mirror and sees that he has green hair standing up. That has gotta kick him in the ass. There is no different beat in rock music. It's all the same. When I was a kid, there was only one kind of music—music to make you feel good, not music to make you mad or angry."

The chain-smoking and chain-drinking Gleason would also like to belt pot smokers. "There's a good thing about drinking booze compared with smoking marijuana," he says. "Booze tells you when you've had enough, and you have to pay for drinking booze, with headaches and stomach eruptions. But with marijuana, you can go on for years. Everything feels fine. Nothing is important, because you can overcome it by smoking pot. No hangover in the morning. Nothing. But sooner or later, it has to affect your values. Once drugs enter the picture, morality declines. And once morality declines, there are no rules to follow, and society disintegrates." A moral breakdown occurs, he said, when "your morals disturb somebody else's way of life. You can do what you want as long as it doesn't disturb anyone's way of life."

Gleason, a former practicing Catholic who has two grown daughters, has another two-word definition for moral decline: the pill. "It's a terrible thing," he says. "Everybody knows that as a kid you



have this libido that wants to get going, and the only thing that prevents you from doing it is the consequences. Someone might get pregnant. But the pill has removed all of that, all of the fear of sex. If sex comes too early with kids who don't understand it, if they do that at the beginning of their life, what have they got to live for? These girls are babies, and to think that they will have a baby is pretty rough, and abortion is just as bad. You are putting an end to a life that might be the savior of the world, and you don't know who you are knocking out of the box."

Gleason has had two heart-bypass operations (the latest in 1983). He has nagging circulatory problems, and he still smokes and drinks. Yet he endures—on the golf course, on movie screens, on TV, where *The Honeymooners* is widely syndicated, and on Showtime, which recently began showing a slew of *Honeymooners* episodes that Gleason had stored in a vault for more than three decades.

It's a 1957 Reggie van Gleason bit, however, that

The fourth thing you can't do when you're loaded is get up in the morning. And awaaaay we go.

lingers as a Gleason metaphor. Actually, it was a set-up for an episode of Edward R. Murrow's *Person to Person* series, in which the urbane Murrow interviewed celebrities in their homes via an enormous TV screen. There was Reggie in his penthouse, wearing his usual formal evening clothes, and in his usual tipsy form, proudly standing in front of a model-train display, poised to guzzle. As Reggie lifted a shot glass, Murrow asked: "Are model trains your hobby, Reggie?"

"No, booze," replied Reggie, downing the whiskey.

LAST SCENE

Cigarette butts have spilled over the edges of the ashtray, yet Jackie Gleason still looks fresh and unruffled as he rises and extends his hand. "Bye, pal," he says.

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ROCK IN A HARD PLACE

Article by Kate Lorinczi



In Hungary, "We just do whatever we want, and wait to see what the authorities will do about it."

They're all geniuses and they're all crazy. They're especially crazy because they're doing it here in Hungary—in Hungary, for Christ's sake. Who's gonna get anywhere? God, it's crazy.

But God's got nothing to do with it. Atheists have always made the best rock 'n' rollers anyway. And Hungary's full of atheists, rockers, electrified shamans, punk fascists, and rock-operatic camp.

"God, it's crazy." Andras Wahorn, piss drunk, makes his way through the crowd, steadying himself on the women in his path. The avant-garde Déjà Vu Revue is in full swing, and you can buy cognac in paper cups, so it's a good night, with maybe a thousand people in the audience. On a runway leading from the front of the stage through the center of the big factory cultural hall, a happy, thin man in a too-big black suit and white shirt, with a shock of curly black hair hanging over the side of his face, dances like a Fellini character in celebration. Behind him, twirling, jumping, gliding, follow ferociously unembarrassed kids wearing his new-wave fashion creations—bright red, purple, and green chiffon sprays and tattered chintzes. Girls in gold felt bag dresses. Boys wearing cotton, Gandhi-like bermudas. The PA system plays "Volare."

Earlier, Wahorn, a big, bearded bear of a musician, sat on the runway with a fellow member of Hungary's premier avant-garde rock group, A.E. Bizottsag (Albert Einstein Committee), making jokes with MC Laci Kistamas while their video image appeared on a screen onstage.

"I've got to find Kistamas and tell him he's a genius. Where the hell is he?" Wahorn bowls off toward the stage doors, catches himself by spinning a young girl around, regains his balance, and disappears.

The stage goes dark. Someone with an electric guitar sits on an amp and jams out raw, dissonant noise to an unrecognizable rhythm. The video screen lights up with what looks like a grade-B Italian car-chase movie. In a small spotlight, a man shuffles onto the stage wearing only a sweater vest, hat, black sheer stockings, and a 10-inch plastic pipe between his naked thighs. His hands cover his essentials. He starts to scream an Edith Piaf song at the top of his lungs. Somehow, it's poignant. Also attention-getting.

"We just do whatever we want and wait to see what the authorities will do about it," says Kistamas nonchalantly. He sang with the now-banned experimental band Control Group. He recently gave an interview to French TV reporters on a boat on the Danube, al-

Left: Vaqtazo Malofikemez, whose group, the Galloping Coroners, is rooted in ancient Siberian shamanic traditions. Opposite page: Europa Kiado

though a government official had pulled him aside and warned him not to say anything "stupid." But Kistamas went home that night. Nobody got arrested.

"Most people live other lives than what the government says. People here tonight are *normal*," according to Kistamas.

Most Hungarians haven't the slightest idea what's going on in the Budapest rock scene. They'd rather listen to Alphaville or the first generation of Hungarian folk-rock musicians from the '60s. Lots of groups merely mimic Western styles, from the Hobo Blues Band aping the young Mick Jagger to Szeptember's West Coast pop. The top teen group is Elso Emelet (First Floor), a Duran Duran copy. Not that they're bad at it, it's just out of context. "Like a cowboy coming over here and doing gypsy folk songs," says Nova, a rock impresario and bass player for Dolly Roll, the hottest group in Hungary, with 50 gold and platinum records. (In Hungary, a gold record signifies 100,000 units sold; platinum, 250,000 units.)

But even Dolly Roll's music is nothing original; it's the '50s rehashed: Brenda Lee, "Johnny B. Goode." Maybe it's so popular now because the '50s never made it to Hungary—pop was banned then. Maybe it's the commerciality of the concept: the songs, the costumes, the movements—all '50s. "We found a formula that works," Nova admits, stroking his pompadour. He's using the one-concept formula for another group, GM 49, whose concept is space, computers, lasers. The second best-selling group in Hungary, with a stage act so percussive it challenges Prince and Sheila E., is R-Co. Its concept: desert safari, camels, jungle.

And Hungarians eat up the camp. Bands perform with dancing showgirls in skimpy costumes, smoke,

lights, skits, broad burlesque humor. If you want to make it into the big time here, you either put kitsch theater into your act or forget it.

The humor group Satobbi (Etcetera) does cartwheels and dances across the stage. They do a mambo (hands on tush—push!), poke fun at punk with a parody in Finnish, and have adopted the giraffe as their mascot/symbol. Every concert is a sell-out.

The members of the new-wave group TOPO Neu-rock kiss the microphone at the end of every song; the lead singer dresses like an oversized Baby Huey in a burlap tunic. The hard rock group Rolls sings about getting past the censors while a girl is silhouetted by a spotlight, holding aloft an olive branch, just like the most symbolic government statue on one of the highest hills of Budapest.

Even Hungary's best pop/new-wave group, KFT, has made a lot of changes in the five years since its single "Puppet on a String" shocked everyone by winning a prize at the Budapest Pop Festival, making it famous faster than any Hungarian group in memory. But the rest of the band's cynical, sad, intellectual songs left audiences cold, so they sweetened up their act.

When the lights go on KFT's current show, rows of dancing fans, arms linked together, stand in front of the stage. As the drummer beats out a quiet, expectant rhythm on the cymbals, singer/lead guitarist Andras Laar leaps onto the stage wearing a dark Napoleonic hat and cape, black britches, and white leggings. Galloping across the stage, cape furling behind him, he lifts his hand across his face like a villain surveying his next victim, and begins "Ball at the Opera." Laar has a superb tenor voice that soars and sustains with ringing clarity. The song has inventive hooks and a strong beat and melody. Its message, coated with a fairy-tale sugar glaze, is that we're all actors on a stage, and we really don't know each other at all.

Song's over, lights go out. Now Laar moves to the side, and the other musicians throw on costumes. The blond, bespectacled drummer is in a long gown with a high-crowned, medieval headdress. The tall, curly-haired keyboardist is a dashing knight, the bassist a nobleman. Lights up, the crowd howls. Laar tells a story in the form of a 17th-century operatic recitative. At the end of the story, everybody's dead, lying all over the stage. The act is tongue-in-cheek, and the audience loves it.

It's the fascist punks who get arrested. CPG (Common Punk Group) is in jail, and another group is on probation. Performances by Hungarian neo-Nazi punks are the hardest to find, supposing you really want to. You see punks hanging out at new-wave shows wearing khaki soldiers' pants, black storm-trooper boots, quasimohawks, black leather jackets, and T-shirts that read "Exploited."

Two boys, pale 17-year-old high school students, stand around at a new-wave show. They hope to see the underground punk group Kezi Chopin (Hand Chopin), but the group was arrested the week before and didn't show up. The boys, Attila and Janos, look too small and vulnerable to be dangerous. Some Hungarian punks are as polite and patient as convent school girls, others will crush your skull.

"We get into fights a lot," says Attila. "The heavy-metal rockers are easy to start fights with, but the best is the gypsies, who we hate. Hungary is a country in Central Europe, so it should be for whites only. The blacks should be sent back to wherever they came from, and the gypsies should be killed. Sometimes people call us fascists. Guess they're sort of right." Scribbled inside a telephone booth at the club: "Kill the gypsies in '85! Arabs fuck your mother!"

"We feel pushed down a lot," Attila continues.

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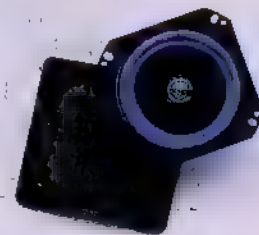
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"There are lots of punks but we're not allowed to have our own club. We're really into the style and feeling of punk, and we feel solidarity with punks everywhere around the world, especially England and the US."

Attila Grandpierre is lead wild man of the Galloping Coroners. Lean and springcoiled, he makes you feel something violent may happen in the next two seconds. It is 3 PM in his small apartment along the old Embassy Row in Budapest, he's just opened his first bottle of cheap champagne of the day, and he's trying to explain his group.

The Galloping Coroners are crazy. They scream, bash, and blare noise in overwhelming primal ecstasy, giving spontaneous, sometimes injury-producing performances when they get around the authorities and find somewhere to play. "We don't know and we don't want to know what will happen," says Grandpierre. "We only want to give it out." They want to force the audience to react. They want to examine society's dead and make them drop the confining bandages of civilized behavior and become mad primitives. Their music is rooted in traditions of the most ancient Eastern European and Siberian shaman tribes, whose thousand-year-old chants and songs sound like American Indian medicine men in a windstorm.

A Billy Idol song is playing at the Eva restaurant, a late-night hangout for working musicians. A guitarist groans, "Why does music from the West sound so damned good?" As long as they look westward, Hungarian rock 'n' rollers feel second rate; but if they use their own resources, there's enough talent and energy to work wonders. And anyway, they're crazy.

Good crazy.



KFT's intellectualism left audiences cold, so the group changed its image—the rest is history.

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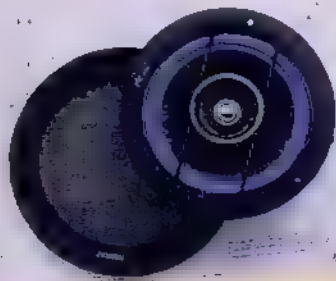
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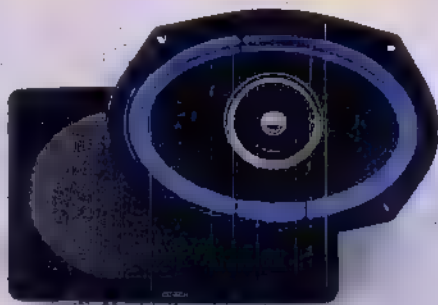


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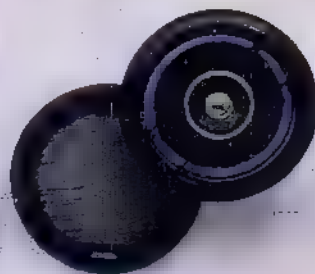
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moving images

Boy George music, typing-pool music, old dogs, new haircuts, a couple of yo-yos with a video, and yet another cowboy band.

CISCO: Hi, I'm Gene Cisco, rock video critic of the *Middletown Daily Mirror*.
EGBERT: And I'm Roger Egbert, rock video critic of the *Middletown Star Ledger*. This month "At the Videos" we'll review videos by James Taylor, Dionne Warwick, Sheena Easton, Aretha Franklin, Brian Setzer, Lloyd Cole and the Commotions, and Wax, but first we have Wham! with "I'm Your Man."
CISCO: I always wondered who Wham! could possibly be the man for, other than

CISCO: I'd like to compare what's in his suitcase now with what was in it when he first arrived. It looks like the suitcase Imelda Marcos left the Philippines with. There's Andrew Ridgeley. I guess he's Wham! now. He's got it all to himself.
EGBERT: Next we have James Taylor's "Only One."
CISCO: Some things never change. Doesn't James Taylor look the same as always?
EGBERT: Well, he looks sober.

CISCO: James Taylor was always the dog people used to kick around, but there's something comforting about him now, like an old sweater.
EGBERT: Who are the new dogs, guys like Bryan Adams or John Cougar Mellencamp? To be quite honest, I always thought James Taylor was wimpy. "Well, you got a friend."
CISCO: I never got too friendly with people like James Taylor.
EGBERT: But I can see how the unhappy

ror is really annoying. This looks like the cheesiest Las Vegas set.
CISCO: She must have been around forever. I can't remember what life was like before her.
EGBERT: I think she appeared on the scene at the same time as *What's New, Pussycat?* She's someone you'd hear on the radio while driving late at night when you'd first gotten your license.
CISCO: I learned to drive to the Temptations and the Four Tops.



a hairdresser.
EGBERT: This is Boy George music, you know. Typing-pool music.
CISCO: Wham! is one of those bands that couldn't fail. They were big stars even before they got here. They knew it, the record company knew it, the DJs and VJs knew it, the T-shirt sellers knew it. In fact, the last people to know it were the fans. They're the classic pop band that was a big success right off the bat, then split up and went their independently wealthy ways—except what took most bands 10 years, Wham! accomplished in two.
EGBERT: There's George, now. Do you think he wears those black leather gloves so he doesn't get calluses from his tam-bourine?
CISCO: Wham! is just like butter, only different.
EGBERT: George is leaving, I guess, because he got too big for Wham!

Would you like to make \$3 for the day and all you can drink? All you got to do is be in our video.

CISCO: This video features the James Taylor Glee Club.
EGBERT: Hey, there's Joni Mitchell.
CISCO: Sweet Baby James sure doesn't go in for big productions. Besides wearing suspenders, everything about James Taylor is pretty sparse.
EGBERT: Except his forehead. Do you think that's a \$7 or a \$150 shirt he's wearing? I'll bet it's a \$150 shirt that's supposed to look like a \$7 shirt. That's the whole story of James Taylor. He's trying to look like less than he is.

girls you see down at the mall can get stuck on James Taylor. He represented the kind of boy they could never ever find.
CISCO: No happy people ever liked James Taylor.
EGBERT: The next video is Dionne Warwick, "Heartbreaker."
CISCO: I'd rather review some Lean Cuisine.
EGBERT: I'm not really qualified to be a food critic, except for maybe a pizza review. I can review coffee, but I wouldn't want to review restaurants. Pizza reviewers are a dime a dozen. . . . There's Dionne. This video starts out with special effects like on *Star Trek*. They probably made this video right on the set of *Solid Gold*. Is her hair white or blonde?
CISCO: She'd look good in a Don King haircut.
EGBERT: Well, this isn't a video if you ask me. As a matter of fact, that rotating mir-

James Taylor and his five-piece band.

EGBERT: And "Expressway to Your Heart." . . . Now we have Sheena Easton, "Jimmy Mac." She's cruising down Main Street in a Cadillac convertible.
CISCO: Is this a jeans commercial or is this the video?
EGBERT: She's driving. She's sitting on a telephone book so she can see over the steering wheel. She's got the speedometer light turned up to 120 watts, illuminating her face. Here come some well-dressed creeps from Hollywood High, driving a \$50,000 jeep.
CISCO: She certainly picked the right song to drive to. For a foreigner, she sure caught on to American culture pretty fast.
EGBERT: Are you kidding? She's married to a Jewish guy from Queens. That's why she understands American culture.

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Peter Anderson

CISCO: She's ■ great beauty.
EGBERT: She's really short. She comes up to about your belt.
CISCO: Perfect! Her backup singers even look like the Marvelettes. So Sheena is Madonna-sized.
EGBERT: No, she's smaller than Madonna. Madonna could easily wrestle her to the ground.
CISCO: Sheena may be prettier.
EGBERT: Ah, Gene, Madonna is much prettier than she is. I think Sheena is a pretty girl, but Madonna is a great beauty. Here's Aretha Franklin, "Another Night."
CISCO: Now, she's my type—a natural woman.
EGBERT: Not too fat, Gene?
CISCO: We're talking soul now.
EGBERT: There's all of Aretha's cosmetics, and she's got a lot of them.
CISCO: Isn't she adorable? She looks a lot like Bette Midler.
EGBERT: I don't think Aretha has black features at all. She's got Middle Eastern features. She looks Jewish or Lebanese. That's why she looks like Bette Midler. If you want to see a great haircut, look at the guy behind her playing guitar.
CISCO: He's got a flattop the size of an aircraft carrier.
EGBERT: It's a Jughead flattop.
CISCO: I wish they had a more down-home Aretha video. There's Jake, the guy Aretha's singing about. He looks like someone from *The Jeffersons*.
EGBERT: No, he looks like he's from NBO, that clothing store where they sell everything but shoes.
CISCO: Next we have Wax, "Right Between the Eyes." Who is Wax?
EGBERT: The music is terrible, but the video is great. There are a lot of interesting film bits collaged together with go-go girls dancing, sunbursts behind exploding tomatoes . . .
CISCO: So, who's in the band, two guys and an exploding tomato?
EGBERT: No, this girl's in the band too, I think—the Tiffany-bejeweled go-go dancer.
CISCO: This is Wham! music, except the guys aren't as good-looking. They remind me of Peter, Paul, and Mary.
EGBERT: I like it. It's total junk. It's awful good, Gene. I love the girl. She can dance. She's got on a really good outfit, with a gold medallion hanging in just the right spot. There's a nice effect: a frozen

rose smashed by a hammer, Sumo wrestlers hopping at high speed. I don't know how you can not like this.
CISCO: They're just a couple of yo-yos with a video.
EGBERT: The great thing about this video is that, right from the title, you know this is a band that exists only to make videos.
CISCO: Now we have Lloyd Cole and the Commotions, "Brand New Friend." I didn't think Lloyd Cole looked this young and clean-cut or that the Commotions looked so old.
EGBERT: They look like they were in the Ink Spots. Doesn't Lloyd look like he's blind or deaf? He looks like he's missing something. Pretty arty, huh? Shots of him standing against painted walls, painting over a word. His hairdo is art, the apartment is art, the holes in the walls are art, the drum kit is art. Finally, a band with no cymbals.
CISCO: I like it. I like any band with an accordion.
EGBERT: Lloyd looks like the little old lady who swallowed the fly. I don't know why. Maybe he'll die.
CISCO: Our last video this month is "The Knife Feels Like Justice" by Brian Setzer. What a pretentious title.
EGBERT: What is this, another cowboy band? Yeah. Brian has a heavy Dylan look. He's got on a big tab-collar shirt and boots of Spanish leather.
CISCO: He just stepped off an old yellow school bus.
EGBERT: And onto the set of *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. His band put their real girlfriends in this video, and it was a big mistake. They should have hired professionals.
CISCO: They brought their real kids along as well. What do they think the West is, ■ souvenir stand?
EGBERT: Their girlfriends are dancing with 98-year-old Pueblo Indians. It's really sad, isn't it?
CISCO: That Indian culture has come to this?
EGBERT: That these poor Indians have to put up with some turd coming up to them and saying, "Well, boys, would you like to make \$3 for the day and all you can drink? Just be in our video."
CISCO: Well, unfortunately we're out of time. See you next month "At the Videos."

Gene Cisco and Roger Egbert live on the same reservation as Scott Cohen and Glenn O'Brien.

Above: Lloyd Cole on his typewriter.

SIOUXSIE continued from p. 66

June 1982—that might have stopped the less- determined.

Severin, however, remains a shadowy, slightly catty figure: When I panned *Join Hands*, he wouldn't confront me directly, preferring instead to send the amiable Budgie to do his dirty work. Luckily, Budgie was amenable to reason. Oddly enough, Siouxsie plays the relationship down. When describing the origin of "92"—the song on *Tinderbox* that contains a snippet of dialogue from *It Came From Outer Space*—she simply says: "On certain things I'll talk to him about ideas and he'll go [she pulls a disgusted face]. On a few things, though, he will actually collaborate and say, 'Well yes, I thought this and blah, blah.'" The offhandedness of this description indicates the Banshees' emotional control and their real relationship, which is obviously close enough; the Banshees have never worn their hearts on their sleeves, preferring to deal in abstractions rather than specifics.

The formula holds true on *Tinderbox*, despite a series of accidents and ill-luck during its making, once again concerning health and guitarists. *Tinderbox* is the Banshees' first album since 1984's *Hyaena*. Two weeks before the release of *Hyaena*, guitarist Robert Smith left to concentrate on the Cure; replacement John Carruthers was found at a week's notice. Recording sessions for *Tinderbox* last summer ended in

disputes and the sacking of producer Hugh Jones. The group's schedule was further hindered when Siouxsie dislocated her knee while performing at London's Hammersmith Odeon last October. It's only just healed after months of physiotherapy.

You wouldn't guess this from the finished product. Its scope, ease, and assurance make it a good collection for the Banshees to relaunch themselves into the international market this spring. Carruthers fits in to the point that you wouldn't know there was a change, and Budgie's drumming is superb. Apart

from the singles "Cities in Dust" and "Candyman" (which perpetuates the Banshees' sinister view of childhood), the sparks fly on "The Crystal Clear Cannons" and the unsettling "Parties Fall."

"That one's about those wonderful-looking people who constantly go out to clubs at night, then go back to a grossy bedsitter room. Their whole day is geared to transforming themselves. I was going through a depressed state myself, I suppose, about growing old, and I worried a bit as to how long I could be Siouxsie from Siouxsie and the

Banshees."

Now that she's become more established, Siouxsie's often icy exterior has relaxed, and she can reveal some of her feelings. She's a peculiar mixture, which of course is part of her appeal. Despite almost defining the female goth, she's nevertheless capable of self-mockery; she bursts out laughing when she reveals that the engineer chosen to complete *Tinderbox* was selected because of his name—Steve Churchyard. Although you might think from the records that she could be pretentious, in person she's quite down-to-earth and sensible—normal, almost. She retains a low public profile, and although the Banshees can be as rock 'n' roll as the rest of them, many of Siouxsie's pleasures are still quite solitary: She reads a lot and enjoys opera's scope and theatricality.

This tension between normality and the extraordinary is crucial to the Banshees. Ultimately—and not to underestimate their material—the Banshees' appeal lies in suburban aspirations. Like David Bowie, Siouxsie and Severin provide role models for every kid stuck in some dull suburb who has looked in the mirror and said, "I want to be someone else. I can change myself!" Self-recreation is an age-old pop dream—just look at Andy Warhol—and the Banshees have achieved it.



Peter Anderson

Siouxsie sells sushi by the seashore.

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This Butt's for You

When you're a Butthole Surfer, the only things that really matter are sex, pot, and Thai food.

Interview by Phyllis Heller

The Butthole Surfers are a bad trip, man, but a unique, rad trip all the same. Originally from Texas, the Surfers are now nomadic ecstasies who've lived on the road more or less constantly for the past three years, playing music that resembles a creepy coagulation of Southwestern death trips and industrial-strength psychedelic vaudeville.

Today the Butthole Surfers are Gibby Haynes (vocals), Paul Leary (guitar), King Koffee and Cabbage Gomez, Jr. (drums), and Jeff the Black-Haired Guy (bass). The following interview with Gibby took place in a roller-rink parking lot.

How did you get the name?
We started out as the Dick Clark Five, then we were the Dick Gas Five, then the Ashtray Babyheads, the Vodka Family Winstons, and the Bleeding Skulls. Then one night we were introduced as the Butthole Surfers. We were gonna use a different name each time we played, but everyone says they're gonna go to do that.

Why were you surfers living in Athens?
Because R.E.M. lives there, and I tell everyone that and they go "Yeah." We were going to paint "Michael Stipe / Despite the hype / I still wanna suck / Your big long pipe" on the side of our van and park it in front of his house.

What's a normal day in the life of a Butthole Surfer?
You wake up and you make a cup of coffee and you take like 50 bong hits. We have a recording studio in our kitchen. We generally record a track and sit around, talk, and argue. We get all kinds of vocals that way. We don't do much else.

Who do you hate?
We hate Madonna. In the same manner that we hate Henry Rollins, and in the same manner that we hate ourselves. The only things we really like are pot, sex, and Thai food.

If you could add a member to the Butthole



Surfers, who would it be?
Iris Chacon, the Dolly Parton of Puerto Rico.

Who are your heroes?
We've all been into Ed Asner a lot. Probably we're into Jeff Spillane the most. He used to be on my college basketball team at Trinity University. He's this weird kind of straight guy with heavy beard growth and a hairy chest. He's a nice guy, but he's kind of geeky. He used to wear this lime-green polyester leisure suit. He's the first person I ever saw light a fart. We usually sing songs that have Jeff Spillane in them, like "Back on Spillane's Gang." I think he's now an accountant somewhere. I was an accountant for a while, too.

What type of places do you like to play?
Places where there aren't any little punk rockers to steal your leather jacket or slash your tires.

What's your inspiration for songs?
There's a melody in your head, and you just kind of put words to it, and then you start crying. I never, ever have words written down beforehand if it's a new song. It's stream of consciousness.

Are you into poetry?
I hate that spoken-word shit. It's just a weird movement that I'm not ready for.

Spoken word with music is OK. I like music. I just don't like the idea of people performing poetry. I can't deal with someone getting up there and reading.

What was high school like for you?
I was kinda fucked. I'm sure everyone hated high school. You got those asshole principals who get up and say "These are the best years of your life." My peers did things like vomit on my car-door handle at parties and urinate in the front seat of my car while I was playing basketball.

Who's the most hated person in America?
Definitely not Ronald Reagan, poor old cancer-butt. Probably the bass player who just quit our band. He's from Canada, and he quit right before a big show in Chicago. He never even told us his real name.

Anything really scary ever happen to you on the road?
We went to this Kentucky Fried Chicken one time, and we were in the back drinking beers and smokin' pot. These pigs surrounded the van. We freaked out, and they said "Relax." We thought we were gonna get arrested. They took our pot and dumped it on the sidewalk and emptied out our beers and gave us back the empty cans. They took our pipe, dumped it out, and gave it back

to us. Then they said everything was cool, and they left. We picked up our pot and drove away. They thought we were armed robbers. They were just amazed that they didn't get shot.

We just laugh as much as possible. It's all humor for us.

We really like food. I can cook a bad-ass peach cobbler.

GIBBY'S SPILLANE PEACH COBBLER
Stir together ½ t. salt and 2 c. flour. Cut in ½ c. shortening until crumbly. Add ½ c. milk and stir with a fork until the dough leaves the sides of the bowl. On a lightly floured board, roll the dough into a rectangle a little less than ¼ in. thick. Put it on a baking sheet and bake it at 425° until it's lightly browned. Then put mixed-up water, brown sugar, egg white, and cinnamon [5 egg whites, ¾ c. water, ½ c. brown sugar, ¼ t. cinnamon] on top of the crust and bake it until it foams up like a custard. When it starts to look cooked, take it out and put sliced fresh peaches on it. It's amazing. It's a killer dessert. ☸

"And if you look closely at his nipples, they spell out 'Paul is dead.'" Past and present Butthole Surfers: standing, L-R, the most hated person in America, Paul Leary; Teresa, Gibby Haynes, King Koffee; airborne, Mark Farner

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